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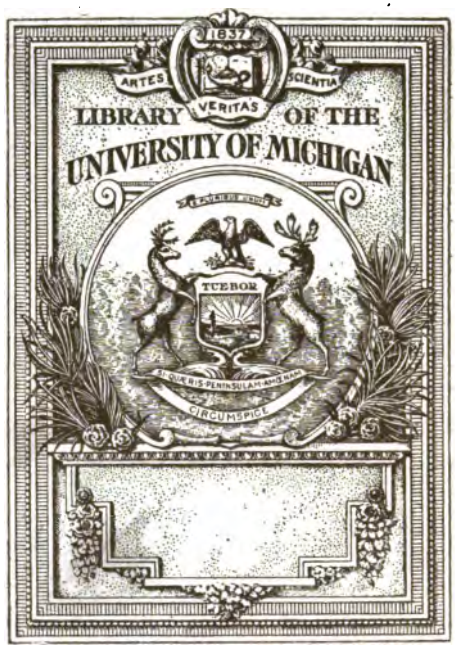

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ENGLISH PARTY LEADERS

AND

ENGLISH PARTIES.

FROM WALPOLE TO PEEL.

INCLUDING A REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE LAST ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

BY

W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BIRD-WORLD," "THE MEDITERRANEAN," "WOMEN OF FASHION," ETC.

"Statesmen,
Who know the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet."—*Tennyson.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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ENGLISH PARTY-LEADERS.

WILLIAM PITT.

IV.

We have now arrived at the period which witnessed the dissipation of Pitt's dreams of a golden age of peace and prosperity. The French Revolution was destined to transform the sincere lover of peace, the statesman whose system was one of reform and retrenchment, into a War Minister, constantly devising new measures of taxation, and annually making large additions to the National Debt. In 1792, even after the beginning of a violent democratic movement in France, Pitt reduced the army and navy, and promised a continual reduction of taxation during the next fifteen years. "Although," he said, "we must not count with certainty on the continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval, yet unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when, from the situation of

Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment." We know how completely events falsified this prediction. We know that Pitt himself helped very energetically to falsify it. But, at first, we are willing to admit, with great reluctance. He was a Minister of Peace, and his policy was peace. He had as strong a dislike of foreign entanglements as Walpole had. Into the war with France he was driven by the united impulse of the Court, the aristocracy, the clergy, and the people.

We of the present generation are able to sum up with calmness the good and evil of the French Revolution, and, striking an impartial balance, we see that the good largely prevails. We recognize now that, whatever it may have been politically, it was the development of a higher intellectual and ethical force than Europe had previously known. We owe to it the secure establishment of the cause of progress, the acknowledgment by all thoughtful statesmen that politics is a branch of moral science, the acknowledgment of the necessity of just dealing between classes if the social well-being is to be maintained, and the acknowledgment of the great truth that the principle of a common responsibility and a common duty applies to nations as well as to individuals. We owe to it the suppression of the lingering follies and inequalities of feudalism. We owe to it the infusion into international politics of a sense of the sublimity of justice, and of a higher conception of the moral obligations of government. We know that if Europe did not pass through the furnace without some scars from the flames, its thorough purification more than

compensated for injuries which after all were temporary. But we must not blame the men who saw the process without foreseeing the result, if they took alarm at what seemed to them the subversion of the entire fabric of social order. From the statesmen of Europe we might, without injustice, have expected the calmness and moderation indicative of the philosophical mind. But they were overborne by the influence of a terrified aristocracy and the pressure of clerical bigotry; partly also, by the excesses of the Revolutionary leaders, which did, indeed, give a show of reasonableness to the terror with which the New Movement was regarded. We believe that Pitt, at the outset, was content to look on, and await the time when France should have regained her self-possession. But he was carried away by a burst of national feeling, provoked by the mistaken eloquence of one great orator and statesman, and apparently justified by the violence and aggressiveness of the French Convention.

That one great orator and writer to whom we must ascribe England's participation in the European crusade against the liberty and independence of France, was Edmund Burke. We have already recorded with what vehemence he threw himself on the side of reaction; and the success with which, by the publication of his 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' he roused the passions and awoke the prejudices of the British public. That success was all the more signal because Burke had always been identified with the principles of religious and civil freedom; was supposed to sympathise with reform, and to approve of considerable administrative changes.

But Burke, a middle-class statesman with aristocratic tendencies, an enthusiast for things as they were, for a constitution with artfully adjusted balances, for an established Church acting as a kind of State police, could see only the Reign of Terror and not the Revolution; could hear only the clang of the knife of the blood-stained guillotine, and not the voices that told of human brotherhood and national morality. His imagination, always too powerful for his judgment, became disordered by the number and horror of its visions. It pictured Europe as one vast shambles; and even England, though separated from the Revolutionary area by a silver streak of sea, as given over to rapine and massacre. It was haunted by lurid images of kings beheaded, of nobles and prelates abandoned to the fury of *sans-culotte* mobs. Burke's whole soul was so filled with adoration of precedent, and order, and long-established custom, that the spectre of the Revolution almost drove him mad. "He who could not endure," says Mr. Morley, "that a few clergymen should be allowed to subscribe to the Bible instead of to the Articles, saw the ancient Church of Christendom prostrated, its possessions confiscated, its priests proscribed, and Christianity itself officially superseded. The economical reformer, who, when his zeal was hottest, declined to discharge a tide-waiter or a scullion in the royal kitchen, who had acquired the shadow of a vested interest in his post, beheld two great orders stripped of all their privileges and deprived of all their lands, though the possession in each case had been sanctified by the prescription of many centuries, and by the express voice of the laws. He, who was full of apprehension and anger at the pro-

posal to take away a member of Parliament from St. Michael's or Old Sarum, had to look on while the most august monarchy in Europe was deliberately overturned. The man who dreaded fanatics, hated atheists, despised political theorizers, and was driven wild at the notion of applying metaphysical rights and abstract doctrines to public affairs, was confident that he saw a vast kingdom given finally up to fanatics, atheists, and theorizers, who talked of nothing but the rights of man, and made it their chief aim to set as wide a gulf as ruin and bloodshed could make, between themselves and every incident or institution in their own history, or in that of every other country."

Pitt had not the political knowledge and temperate sagacity which could withstand the torrent of Burke's inflammatory eloquence, and the impetuosity of the national fear and apprehension. Perhaps he was influenced, unconsciously to himself, by the attitude which his great rival, the Whig leader, assumed. If Fox stood forward as the advocate and apologist of the Revolution, Pitt naturally became its enemy. What English statesmen most needed at this juncture was moderation, and this supreme quality of statesmanship neither Fox nor Pitt exhibited. The former went as far in one direction as the latter in another. Fox refused to see the clouds on the sky; Pitt was not less blind to the brightness on the eastern horizon. The former failed to exert his power over his party and the country to repress those outbreaks of prejudice, and to check the growth of that war-fever to which England is always dangerously liable. The latter allowed his fervid sympathies to predominate

over his discretion, and in his enthusiastic delight at the benefits to spring from the Revolution failed to censure its excesses. Had he been moderate, Pitt might have been moderate, or at least, would have been less passionate; and the two statesmen, united, could have successfully withstood the military tendencies of the Court and the unreasoning ardour of the country. But his Whiggism for awhile wandered on the very verge of Jacobinism; and Pitt, throwing aside, probably with a pang of regret, his pacific projects and financial reforms, yielded to the ignorance of his party, and became the leader and prophet of Absolutism. His course was easy enough when his rival could profess that the bloody despotism of Robespierre was better than the restoration of the Bourbons. His course was easy enough when the Whig leader, the leader of a party whose chief glory was based on its achievement of the peaceful Revolution of 1688, could defend the dark deed of "the Tenth of August" (1792). His course was easy enough, when Fox, the leader of a party which had striven nobly and successfully on behalf of Constitutional Government, and opposed to the uttermost the despotic pretensions of the Crown, could speak with approval of a military usurper like Bonaparte.

Impelled in a reactionary direction by the extravagance of the Opposition, as well as by the pressure of the Court and the nation, which had absorbed Burke's anti-revolutionary fever, Pitt gradually abandoned his stronghold of peace and economy. His downward movement was indicated by various measures; futile in themselves, yet injurious as parts of a bad policy; a

royal proclamation against seditious writings, an Alien Bill aimed at the supposed propagators of French revolutionary principles, another Bill forbidding the circulation of assignats, and yet another which prohibited the exportation of corn and flour to France. He refused to acknowledge the Republican Government; and the Republican Government in its turn vowed vengeance against England as the defender of monarchical tyranny. After the execution of Lewis the 16th, peace became impossible; though while rightly condemning and protesting against such an act of cruelty, it was clearly not the duty of England to interfere in behalf of a dynasty that France had rejected. Had the British Government been patient and watchful, the excesses of the Revolution would have been disowned by the French themselves; but the coalition into which it flung all its energies provoked them to undertake a wild and fanatical propagandism, and to treat every country with a monarchical government as an enemy. "There must be no more kings in Europe," exclaimed Danton, "one king would be sufficient to endanger the general liberty; and I request that a committee be established for the purpose of promoting a general insurrection among all peoples against kings." A prudent statesman might well have treated such ravings with contempt; but Pitt had gone too far by this time to recede, and had entered on the later and darker period of his Ministerial career. From the 19th of November, 1792, when the National Convention issued its famous decree, "offering fraternity and assistance" to any nation that desired to recover its freedom, Pitt appears to have resolved upon war. He adopted Burke's

views in their widest extent; shared his apprehensions to the fullest; and devoted all his energies to the task of beating France to her knees, that revolution might not rear its crest at home. Alison has explained for us the motives which really animated Pitt's government. "The passions," he says, "were excited; democratic ambition was awakened; the desire of power, under the name of reform, was rapidly gaining ground among the middle ranks, and the institutions of the country were threatened with an overthrow as violent as that which had recently taken place in the French Monarchy. In these circumstances the only mode of checking the evil was by engaging in a foreign contest, by drawing off the ardent spirits into active service, and in lieu of the modern desire for innovation, rousing the ancient gallantry of the British people." That is, Pitt plunged the country into a long and costly war in order that rotten boroughs might still flourish, and the middle class be prevented from a free expression of opinion. Yet there was no real ground for alarm. The nation was thoroughly loyal. A few so-called Jacobin Societies flourished, but they numbered only some odd thousands of members, and included no men of special mark or influence. Thomas Paine had published his 'Rights of Man,' but no large body of the English people contemplated or desired a subversion of the social system. The religious world of England was disgusted by the Atheistic follies of the French Revolutionists; the philosophers and social reformers, by their cruelties, their theatrical parade, and their violent intolerance. The Throne and the Church were equally safe. Volunteers

came forward with the utmost promptitude; neither the army, navy, nor militia showed any signs of disaffection. In truth, to hold the Revolutionary doctrines was to incur unpopularity. At Birmingham the mob sacked the house of Dr. Priestly, because he was a reformer in politics, and in religion a heretic. Loyal societies were formed in every town, and by their writings and publications identified patriotism with the most enthusiastic loyalty. The streets echoed with the sounds of loyal ballads, appealing to John Bull's national pride, and calling on him to stand by the Church, the King, and the laws. Such compositions as Dibdin's 'Ninety-Three,' and the anonymous 'Word to the Wise,' circulated by thousands. Why need Government have condescended to panic when the heart of the people readily responded to strains, Tyrtean in their patriotism though not in their poetic merit, like the following?—

"Our women are virtuous, our women are fair,
Which is more than, they tell us, your Frenchwomen are;
They know they are happy, they know they are free,
And that Liberty's not at the top of the tree.

"Then let's be united, and know when we're well,
Nor believe all the lies these Republicans tell.
They take from the rich, but don't give to the poor,
And to all sorts of mischief they'd open the door.

"Our soldiers and sailors will answer these sparks,
Though they threaten Dumourier shall spit us like larks;
True Britons don't fear them, for Britons are free,
And know Liberty's not to be found on a tree.

"Ye Britons, be wise, as you're brave and humane,
You then will be happy without any *Paine*,
We know of no despots, we've nothing to fear,
For this new-fangled nonsense will never do here."

Or take a verse or two of Dibdin's popular effusion:—

"All true honest Britons, I pray you draw near;
Bear a bob in the chorus to hail the New Year;
Join the mode of the times, and with heart and voice sing
A good old English burden—'tis 'God save the King!'
Let the year Ninety-three
Commemorated be
To time's end; for so long loyal Britons shall sing,
Heart and voice, the good chorus of 'God save the King!' . . .

"Some praise a new freedom imported from France:
Is liberty taught, then, like teaching to dance?
They teach freedom to Britons!—our own right divine!—
A rushlight might as well teach the sun how to shine!
In famed Ninety-three,
We'll convince them we're free!
Free from ev'ry licentiousness faction can bring;
Free with heart and with voice to sing 'God save the King!'

"Thus here, though French fashions may please for a day,
As children prize playthings, then throw them away;
In a nation like England they never do hurt;
We improve on the ruffle by adding the shirt!
Thus in famed Ninety-three,
Britons all shall agree,
While with one heart and voice in loud chorus they sing,
To improve 'Ça ira' into 'God save the King!'"

The fulness and force with which the current of English thought and feeling ran against the Revolution are shown by the utter powerlessness of the Opposition for several years; so that it was jestingly said that its members might all have been held in one hackney coach.* They seldom formed a minority of greater

* "I heard old George Byng say, at the dinner given to him to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his having sat for Middlesex, alluding to those times, 'It has been asserted that the Whigs could all have been held in one hackney coach. This is a calumny. We should have filled two.'"—Lord Campbell, 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' v. 614.

strength than half-a-hundred. These facts show that Pitt had no excuse for the repressive policy upon which he entered. We can understand that the novel phenomena of the French Revolution might excite his apprehension; but they afforded him no justification for involving the country in repressive and retrograde domestic legislation.

In November, 1792, we find Lord Grenville, who was then Foreign Secretary, writing to his brother in a strain of statesmanlike moderation and prudence: "All my ambition is that I may, at some time hereafter, when I am freed from all active concern in such a scene as this, have the inexpressible satisfaction of being able to look back upon it, and to tell myself that I have contributed to keep my own country at least a little longer from sharing in all the evils of every sort that surround us. I am more and more convinced that this can only be done by keeping wholly and entirely aloof, and by watching much at home, but doing very little indeed: endeavouring to rouse up in the country a real determination to stand by the Constitution when it is attacked, as it most infallibly will be if these things go on; and, above all, trying to make the situation of the lower orders among us as good as it can be made. In this view, I have seen, with the greatest satisfaction, the steps taken in different parts of the country for increasing wages, which I hold to be a point of absolute necessity, and of a hundred times more importance than all that the most doing government could do in twenty years towards keeping the country quiet."

In less than three months from this date, Lewis the 16th was guillotined (January 21st). The French Ambassador was immediately ordered to quit England; and on the 1st of February the French Government declared war against England and Holland. Pitt showed no want of vigour in the efforts he made to carry on a successful campaign. Ten thousand troops were despatched to Holland, under the Duke of York. A combined naval and military expedition was organised to assist the insurgent royalists at Toulon. Our fleets were active in every sea. As a War Minister, the general impression is that Pitt conspicuously failed; and though Lord Stanhope undertakes an elaborate defence, we do not think he succeeds in overthrowing the verdict at which History had arrived. He seems to think it enough to show that Pitt strove with unremitting toil by day and night; that in his plans he consulted the most skilful officers at his command; that in his diplomacy he laboured to build up new coalitions when the old had crumbled away, and for that object poured forth subsidies with a liberal, nay, a lavish hand; that he sought to strike the enemy whenever or wherever any vulnerable point lay bare, —on the northern frontier in concert with the Austrian armies, on the southern coast when Toulon had risen, on the western coast when a Royalist insurrection had broken out in La Vendée,—and he thinks it hard that, having striven as far as a civilian could strive for the success of our arms both by land and sea, the reverses on the former should be cast upon his memory, whilst at the same time he is allowed no merit for our triumphs on the latter. But a Minister's war policy, like his peace

policy, must be considered as a whole, and judged according to its success or failure. Pitt's policy failed, and he must be held responsible for it. We met with some successes at sea, notably, Lord Howe's victory of the 1st of June, but these were due to the energy and spirit which Lord Spencer, the Whig First Lord of the Admiralty, displayed in his administration. Unfortunately, they did not greatly influence the ultimate issue of the war. It seems to us that Pitt's father, in Pitt's place, and with Pitt's opportunities, would have avoided Pitt's disasters. We do not think he would have entrusted England's armies to incapable generals, or frittered away her strength on numberless small disunited efforts, or wasted her resources in subsidies to foreign powers that had no need of such assistance, and gave nothing in return. We believe that Chatham would have devised from the first a comprehensive plan of hostilities, would have selected one or two convenient bases of operation, and have concentrated the power and wealth of the country upon some great enterprise not unworthy of them. To use Mr. Goldwin Smith's apt phrase, Pitt had not his father's eye for men; and when a man struggled forward, he did not care to distinguish or to reward him. When Nelson won the great victory of the Nile, Pitt gave him only the lowest rank in the peerage, and excused this parsimony on the plea that Nelson would live as the hero of the greatest of naval victories, and none would ask whether he had been made baron, viscount, or earl. Then why reward him at all?

With the war began a Reign of Terror in Great Britain. Lord Stanhope calls it "a vigorous, nay severe

exertion of the law." We should prefer to call it an abuse of legal forms, a prostitution of the law to party purposes. Lord Stanhope enlarges on the dangers that existed from the licence of the press, and the proceedings of revolutionary societies; but, we as have shown, the mass of the people were thoroughly, we may almost say, fanatically loyal; and so strong a Government as Pitt's could have afforded to smile at the occasional ebullitions of hot-headed enthusiasts. But in its ardour to convict everybody who was not satisfied that the constitution was incapable of further improvement, and in its anxiety to work to the utmost the powers of the law, it had no time for prudent consideration. The year 1793 was occupied with a series of political trials, in almost all cases for offences which would now be denominated trivial, the worst feature of which was that the judges generally acted as both prosecutors and judges. In 1794, the work of repression went on with increased vigour. In London two revolutionary societies, the "Corresponding" and the "Constitutional Information," had combined their strength, and proposed to call a Convention of the People which should hold its sessions in London. The idea was an absurd one, and could never have been realised. But the Government fell into a panic; and causing eight of the principal members to be apprehended, namely, Thomas Hardy, Daniel Adams, John Horne Tooke (author of 'The Diversions of Purley'), the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce (author of the "Scientific Dialogues'), John Thelwall, John Augustus Bonney, John Richter, and John Lovett, flung them into the Tower. Their books and papers were seized, and referred by Mr. Pitt

to a Secret Committee of the House of Commons, who in less than twenty-four hours reported that they had discovered ample proofs of a traitorous conspiracy. "However," they said, "at different periods the term of Parliamentary Reform may have been employed, it is obvious that the present view of these societies is not intended to be prosecuted by any application to Parliament, but, on the contrary, by an open attempt to supersede the House of Commons." Armed with this report, Pitt introduced a bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; and, in spite of the eloquent and energetic opposition of Fox and Sheridan, carried it triumphantly through the House of Commons. In the Lords it was opposed only by nine peers.

In September, the number of prisoners charged with high treason was increased, by fresh arrests, to thirteen, including Thomas Holcroft, the dramatist. It is important to observe that not one of these supposed criminals was of a social rank or influence which could have rendered him a formidable adversary to an established Government; or of a character likely to be induced to accede with fervour to any schemes of violence or bloodshed. In bringing them to trial, it is obvious that the Ministry incurred a serious responsibility. Success could bring them no credit, while failure could not but cover them with obloquy. And if it be surprising that the Cabinet, strengthened as it now was by the accession of the Duke of Portland, Earl Fitzwilliam, Mr. Windham, and others of the Rockingham Whigs, should have ordered the prosecution of these men at all, it is still more surprising that they should have done so on what was unquestionably imperfect and unsatisfactory evidence.

The first trial, that of Thomas Hardy, the shoemaker, began on the 28th of October before a special jury. The case was opened by Sir John Scott (afterwards Lord Eldon) in a speech of nine hours' length. Erskine conducted the defence, and cross-examined with much ingenuity the witnesses brought forward by the Government. His speech for the defence lasted seven hours,—no very long time compared with that occupied by counsel on recent occasions, but then regarded as an extraordinary effort,—and was a masterpiece of ingenious argument.* Never, says Lord Stanhope, was the public expectation, though high, more fully answered; and never did his ability as an advocate shine more conspicuously. In these great State Trials his forensic fame reached its culminating point. The main drift of his reasoning, which is now accepted as a fundamental principle of law, was to show that the statutes on high treason, inflicting as they did the most tremendous penalties, required a specially rigid and literal construction. They had been enacted for the safety of the royal life and person, not for the protection of the royal Government. It was undoubtedly a crime to conspire against the King's lawful authority, supposing such conspiracy to be proved, but that was not the crime alleged against the prisoner Hardy; that was not high treason as defined by the Act of Edward the 3rd. The jury were of Erskine's opinion, and, to the mortification of the Ministry, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." Mr. Horne Tooke was then indicted on a similar charge, supported by almost the same

* Erskine's 'Speeches,' iii. 53.

evidence. Erskine again acted as counsel; though the prisoner, a man of ready and considerable ability, took an active part in his own defence. A verdict of "Not Guilty" was returned. The baffled Government, contrary to all custom, and, it may be said, all the rules of justice, undertook a third prosecution, that of Thelwall.* In this, too, they were defeated; and they then retired from the struggle, with signal loss of credit.†

In the following year, Pitt pushed his repressive system still further. A succession of bad harvests, the heavy burden of increasing taxation, the languor of trade, the ill-success which had attended the military projects of the Ministry,—these and other causes had at length fomented a wide-spread feeling of discontent and irritation, which

* Thelwall, in the course of the trial, feeling dissatisfied with Erskine's conduct of the case, wrote to him, "I'll be hanged if I don't plead my own cause;" to which Erskine replied, "You'll be hanged if you do!"

† "Most fortunate," remarks Sir Erskine May, "was the result of these trials. Had the prisoners been found guilty, and suffered death, a sense of injustice would have aroused the people to dangerous exasperation. The right of free discussion and association would have been branded as treason; public liberty would have been crushed; and no man would have been safe from the vengeance of the Government. But now it was acknowledged, that if the executive had been too easily alarmed, and Parliament too readily persuaded of the existence of danger, the administration of justice had not been tampered with; and that, even in the midst of panic, an English jury would see right done between the Crown and the meanest of its subjects. And while the people were made sensible of their freedom, ministers were checked for a time in their perilous career. Nor were these trials, however impolitic, without their uses. On the one hand, the alarmists were less credulous of dangers to the State; on the other, the folly, the rashness, the ignorance, and criminality of many of the persons connected with political associations were exposed,"—'Constitutional History,' ii. 158.

found vent in violent speeches at large popular meetings, and was encouraged by the free diffusion of "seditious handbills" and "ribald ballads." The caricatures of the time are sufficiently expressive. Thus, one from the fertile and incisive pencil of Gillray, represents Pitt as Death on the White Horse (the insignia of the House of Hanover), riding over a drove of pigs, the representatives of Burke's "swinish multitude." In another, Pitt is seen at work with a grinding-mill, in which John Bull is being converted into money. The Prince of Wales draws off a portion of the golden stream to pay the debts incurred by his profligacy, while the ministerial pensioners, Burke, Dundas, and Lord Loughborough, scramble for the rest. An absurd report that Pitt had suggested that people should eat meat to save bread, equivalent to a Duke of Norfolk's suggestion in our own days that the poor should live on curry-powder soup, was the subject of a caricature called 'The British Butcher,' in which the minister serves John Bull with high-priced meat to stop his demand for cheap bread. The epigraph attached to it runs thus:—

> "Since bread is so dear (and you say you must eat),
> For to save the expense you must live upon meat;
> And as twelvepence the quartern you can't pay for bread,
> Get a crown's worth of meat,—it will serve in its stead."

The agitation continued to spread, and immense meetings were held in the metropolis and the principal towns. On the morning of the 29th of October, the day on which the King was to open Parliament in person, crowds collected along the route of the procession, until

as many as 200,000 people were assembled. The King's carriage moved on at first amid gloomy silence. Not a hat was raised; not a single cheer was heard. After awhile, the angry feelings of the multitude sought relief in groans and hisses, and in loud shouts of "Give us peace and bread!" "No war!" "No Pitt!" "Down with George!"; and as the royal vehicle passed through Margaret Street, a pebble or bullet, shot from an air-gun,* broke the window. Still wilder grew the tumult on the King's return, and he did not reach St. James's Palace without considerable difficulty. Thence, in his private coach, he proceeded to Buckingham House, but again the populace pressed around him, shouting, "Bread! bread! peace! peace!" and a strong detachment of the Guards was required to release him from his inconvenient situation.†

There was no pretence for treating this wild outbreak of a hungry mob as a revolutionary movement; yet Pitt made it the excuse for a series of enactments unparalleled since the time of Charles the 1st. One was intended for the repression of seditious meetings; the other widened the definition and more liberally applied the penalties of high treason. The former provided that every public meeting, for the discussion of questions affecting the Church or State, was to be summoned by previous advertisement, signed by resident householders, and all assemblages not convened in this manner

* "When a stone was thrown at one of his glasses in returning home, the King said, 'That is a stone; you see the difference from a bullet.'"—*Lord Colchester.*

† Lord Colchester's 'Diary,' i. 2, 3.

were declared illegal. Moreover, even legally constituted meetings were subjected to the operation of the Riot Act, if, in the opinion of any two justices, they were dangerous to the public peace. Lecture-rooms, and gatherings in the open air, to which admittance was obtained by payment, were required to be licensed, and were placed under police supervision. The second Bill extended the crime of treason in the most outrageous manner. "Writing, preaching, and speaking, which, under the existing law, would be criminal only if accompanying overt acts, were themselves constituted overt acts, and rendered the offender guilty of treason. A new offence was created, which subjected to the penalties of a high misdemeanour any person who, by writing, preaching or speaking, should incite or stir up the people to hatred or dislike of His Majesty's person, or the established Government and Constitution of the realm." * These arbitrary and unconstitutional measures were warmly opposed by the Whig leader, and the few Whigs who yet remained true to the old Whig principles. Fox gave way to his emotions in a strain of fervid and indignant eloquence. Better at once, he said, to declare that after experience, and upon a review of the condition of the world's affairs, a free constitution was no longer suitable to England! He hoped, however, that the people, while still allowed to meet, would assemble and express their abhorrence of such tyrannical propositions; for if they were to be denied a legal mode of making known their grievances, they would sink to the

* Massey, iv. 16, 17.

level of those unhappy creatures who had no alternative between armed resistance and servile submission. In spite of this protest, the Bills were voted by enormous majorities. Fox declined, when they were in committee, to discuss their details; he hoped, he said, they would pass in their integrity, that the people might fully understand the nature and the extent of the attack which had been made upon their liberties. "If ministers are determined," he continued, "by means of the corrupt influence they possess in the two Houses of Parliament, to pass the Bills in direct opposition to the declared sense of a great majority of the people, and if they should be put in force with all their rigorous provisions; then, if my opinion were asked by the people as to their obedience, I should tell them that it was no longer a question of moral obligation and duty, but of prudence." Language so ardent did not fail to bring down Pitt's censure on the head of its speaker. He was told that he incited the people to appeal to the sword, and desired to plunge the country in anarchy and bloodshed.* But the words of Fox will not justly bear such a construction; and it was well, as Mr. Massey says, that at a time when the current of public opinion ran violently in a direction opposite to freedom, and the Government seemed possessed by a panic fatal to cool reflection and prudent statesmanship,

* On the motion for leave to introduce the Bill, the minority was only 42. When its details were on the point of being discussed in committee, Fox, Erskine, Charles Grey, Whitbread, and other leading Whigs, withdrew from the House. They reappeared on the third reading, and voted against it; but the Bill passed by a large majority, 266 to 51.—Lord Colchester, 'Diary,' i. 11. Fox, in 1797, moved the repeal of this and the Treasonable Practices Act, but obtained only 52 supporters.

a great Englishman should stand forward, even if alone, and reassert and defend that precious cause of liberty and justice for which an Eliot had perished in prison, a Hampden on the battle-field, and a Sidney on the scaffold. We can fancy the shade of Chatham turning with disgust from the historic arena where he had so often and so nobly contended on behalf of the principles of freedom, when his son appeared in the character of their bitter enemy, and essayed to lay sacrilegious hands on the ark of the Constitution. Pitt carried his measures; but he shrank from putting them into operation, and the only use of their presence in the Statute Book is to show into what follies a great statesman may be hurried, when he allows his fear to prevail over his reason, and subordinates his convictions to the supposed exigencies of party. On the evidence of his own followers, such arbitrary proceedings were unnecessary, and, therefore, unjustifiable. They boasted, and not without cause, that the ministry was supported by the great body of the people, as well as by the Crown, the Church, and the landed gentry. What, then, was to be apprehended from the irregularities of a mob? Why encroach upon the liberties of the subject to do what the civil power was quite competent to do? But the minister still continued his imperious career. The country was infested with a plague of spies and informers. The windy nonsense uttered in the taproom was held sufficient to call for the rigour of the law. Thus, a low attorney, having boasted in a coffeehouse, from which the company afterwards kicked him, that he was an advocate of "equality" and republicanism, was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to

exposure in the pillory and six months' imprisonment. Political cases of the flimsiest character were brought before the squires at the quarter-sessions, and settled off-hand, without any attempt to discriminate offences or investigate evidence. And all this was done under the rule of a Minister who had begun his career as a political reformer and an enthusiastic defender of the rights of the subject! *

In Ireland, however, the system of repression was pushed to a much greater extreme than was possible in England. In 1795, Earl Fitzwilliam, at the instigation of the Duke of Portland and the ex-Whig section of Pitt's Cabinet, was appointed Lord Lieutenant. He was a nobleman of considerable talents and of unblemished character, who went to Ireland with a message of peace and conciliation. His rule, though moderate, was firm; but because he attempted to clean the Augean stable of corruption and chicanery into which the Irish Government had been converted by party intrigues, because he attempted to put down jobbers and extirpate jobbery, the whole legion of place-holders and place-seekers

* "It was in one of these state trials, where the accused, Major Cartwright, was the leader of a Parliamentary Reform Association, that the Pitt of former days, the Pitt who had once been a member of the same association and the foremost champion of its principles, was put into the witness-box by the defence against Pitt, the renegade from Reform, the prosecutor of Reformers in these evil times. Pitt might plead that circumstances were altered, and that when circumstances are altered honourable men may change. Honourable men may change, and that they should have full liberty of change is essential to the public interest and to the integrity of public life. But no great nature ever passes a sponge over its former self: no great nature ever persecutes old friends."—GOLDWIN SMITH, pp. 265, 266.

opened cry, full-mouthed, against him. To stem the tide of political reform they artfully erected a barrier of religious prejudice. Lord Fitzwilliam had given his hearty sanction to a measure of Catholic relief introduced into the Irish Parliament. This was the lever which the Fitzgibbons and the Beresfords, the men who battened upon Protestant ascendancy, required. They appealed immediately to the conscience of the King, whose narrow intellect had always associated the refusal of the Catholic claims with the sanctity of his Coronation oath, and thus made the oath which pledged him to do justice to his people an excuse for the persecution of no insignificant minority of them. The King sent for Pitt, and insisted on Lord Fitzwilliam's recall; to which Pitt was by no means averse, having yielded reluctantly to his appointment. To the royal bigotry and the instances of the "Castle" faction, was accordingly sacrificed the most popular Lord Lieutenant who had ever administered the affairs of Ireland. He was replaced by Lord Camden. It was a fatal error; one which effectually invalidates Pitt's pretensions to the higher statesmanship. A fatal error; from the effects of which the country has begun to recover only since the accomplishment of the remedial legislation of recent years. A fatal error; for it united both Roman Catholics and the Presbyterian Protestants, the former from a deep strong feeling of injustice, the latter from their respect for the traditions of liberty, against the British Government. A fatal error; for it deprived the Grattans and the Ponsonbys of their influence over the people, whom it

threw into the hands of revolutionists, like the Edward Fitzgeralds and the Wolfe Joneses.

No hatred is so fierce as religious hatred; and the conflicts which now broke out between the Roman Catholics and the Orangemen afforded fresh confirmation of a truth written in characters of blood on the page of history. With inconceivable folly, or gross turpitude, the Government armed the Protestant yeomanry, 37,000 in number, and permitted them to assume the Orange Ribbon, the well-known symbol of Protestant ascendancy. The cruelties these men perpetrated are almost incredible. So coldly impartial an historian as Mr. Massey, admits that they differed only in degree from the worst enormities of the French revolutionists. "Hundreds of unoffending people, and people who were guilty of no other offence than professing the creed of their fathers, or of letting fall a word of discontent, were flogged until they were insensible, or made to stand upon one foot on a pointed stake. These were ordinary tortures. Sometimes the wretched victim was half hanged, or the scalp was torn from the head by a pitched cap." Sir Ralph Abercromby, the commander of the British army in Ireland, rightly branded the perpetrators of these enormities as an armed banditti, "formidable to everybody but the enemy." His honourable candour cost him his command. It is no wonder that in such circumstances thousands hastened to join the ranks of the United Irishmen, a body bent on sundering the connection between the two countries. They were driven into rebellion by the instinct of self-preservation. The flame of revolt spread fast and far; and was fanned into fury

by the arbitrary proceedings of the "Castle officials." Ireland, in fact, was divided into two camps; and there was no room in either for the thoughtful few, who, while they condemned and abhorred the tyranny of the Government, were not prepared to resist it by rebellion. The details of a formidable conspiracy were matured by the leaders of the United Irishmen, and assistance was sought from the French Directory. In the spring of 1798, an informer named Reynolds revealed the plot to the authorities in Dublin; and Oliver Bond, and thirteen others were arrested. The police also captured Lord Edward Fitzgerald, after a desperate resistance; but a wound which he received in the struggle proved mortal after a few days. The revolt then broke out in several parts of the country. It was powerless, however, against the military strength of the Government, and was everywhere quenched in blood. The loyalists, as they called themselves, were guilty of the most shocking cruelties; and these roused in the breasts of the Irish peasantry a vindictive hatred which bore equally terrible fruit. Martial law was thereupon proclaimed, under cover of which, as Lord Cornwallis, whom Pitt sent over in haste to replace Lord Camden, wrote, "numberless murders are hourly committed without any process or examination whatever . . . The yeomanry," he continues, "are in the style of the loyalists in America, only much more numerous and powerful, and a thousand times more ferocious. These men have served their country, but they now take the lead in rapine and murder. The Irish militia, with few officers, and those chiefly of the worst kind, follow closely on

the heels of the yeomanry in murder and every kind of atrocity; and the Fencibles take a share, although much behindhand with the others. The language of the principal persons of the country all tends to encourage this system of blood; and the conversation, even at my table, where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, etc." Of the brutal temper of the yeomanry a single illustration will suffice. A party of the Mount Kennedy corps, on a fine autumn night, were patrolling the village of Delbary, in the county of Wicklow. One Whollagan, with some of his comrades, entered the cottage of a labourer named Dogherty, and asked whether any bloody rebels were there. The only inmates happened to be Dogherty's wife and a sick lad, her son, who was eating his supper. Whollaghan asked if the youth were Dogherty's son, and receiving an affirmative answer, said, "Then, you dog, you are to die here." "I hope not," replied the lad; and begged if any charge were made against him, he might be taken before Mr. Latouche, a neighbouring magistrate, favourably known for his humanity and justice. Replying, with an oath, that he cared nothing for Latouche, the wretch raised his gun. The mother implored him, for the love of God, to take her life instead of her child's; but, after pouring out a torrent of foul abuse, Whollaghan pulled the trigger. Twice it missed fire. A comrade handed him another gun; when the mother, to save her boy, rushed at the muzzle, and in the struggle the piece went off, lodging a ball in young Dogherty's arm. The murderers then left the cabin; but, returning shortly afterwards, Whol-

laghan exclaimed, "Is not the dog dead yet?" "Oh! yes, sir," said the weeping mother, "he is dead enough." "For fear he is not," said Whollaghan, "let him take this." And, deliberately levelling his musket, he fired a fourth time; Dogherty fell from his mother's arms, dead. The assassin was tried for his crime, but by court-martial, not by civil tribunal; and the defence being that he was a loyal and humane subject, and his victim a supposed traitor, his lenient judges found, "That the prisoner did shoot and kill Thomas Dogherty, a rebel;" but they acquitted him "of any malicious or wilful intention of murder."

By the failure of a French expedition, under General Humbert, the last hopes of the insurgents were extinguished; but what had occurred convinced the Government that the only hope of permanent peace lay in the legislative union of the two countries. The project was not unfavourably received by the Irish themselves; the Protestants, indeed, looked upon it with some suspicion, but the Catholics saw in it a security against Orange ascendancy, and expected that it would be accompanied by a measure of emancipation. Lord Cornwallis, whose sagacity and courage had been proved in a long and brilliant course of Indian service, did not hesitate to express his conviction that until the Catholics were admitted to equal rights under the effective guardianship of an Imperial Legislature, Ireland would not be free from internal disorder. Pitt was of the same opinion. He saw that a perpetuation of the Orange Government would wreck not only the peace of Ireland, but the security of the Empire; and he resolved to carry the

Union. A Royal Message was sent down to both Parliaments on the 22nd of January, 1799, recommending the consideration of the best means of consolidating the strength, the power, and the resources of the British empire. In the Irish Parliament the Address in answer was met by an amendment, moved by Mr. Ponsonby, pledging the House to maintain an independent legislature as established in 1782. The amendment was rejected by only one vote. In the English House of Commons, a similar amendment, moved by Sheridan, was negatived without a division; and resolutions in favour of the Union were carried. From the speech delivered by Pitt on this occasion a few extracts may be put before the reader:—

"The country is at this time engaged in the most momentous and important conflict that ever occurred in the history of the world; a conflict in which Great Britain is distinguished for having made the only manful and successful stand against the common enemy of civilized society. We see the point in which that enemy thinks us the most assailable. Are we not then bound in policy and prudence to strengthen that vulnerable point, involved as we are in a contest of liberty against despotism, of property against plunder and rapine, of religion and order against impiety and anarchy? There was a time when this would have been termed declamation; but, unfortunately, long and bitter experience has taught us to feel that it is only the feeble and imperfect representation of those calamities, the result of French principles and French arms, which are every day attested by the wounds of a bleeding world . . . .

"No man can say that in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the Catholics without endangering the State, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre. On the other hand, two propositions are indisputable: first, when the conduct of the Catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the Government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the Established religion, and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure; when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an united Imperial Parliament, with much greater safety than it could be in a separate legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary, after the Union, to withhold from the Catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed if the Protestant legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and imperial; and the Catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint . . . .

"If it should happen that there be a country which, against the greatest of all dangers that threaten its peace and security, has not adequate means of protecting itself without the aid of another nation; if that other be a neighbouring and kindred nation, speaking the same language, whose laws, whose customs, and habits are the same in principle, but carried to a greater degree of perfection, with a more extensive commerce, and more

abundant means of acquiring and diffusing national wealth—the stability of whose Government, the excellence of whose constitution is more than ever the admiration and envy of Europe, and of which the very country of which we are speaking can only boast an inadequate and imperfect resemblance—under such circumstances, I would ask, what conduct would be prescribed by every rational principle of dignity, of honour, or of interest? I would ask whether this is not a faithful description of the circumstances which ought to dispose Ireland to an union?—whether Great Britain is not precisely the nation with which, on these principles, a country situated as Ireland is would desire to unite? Does an union under such circumstances, by free consent, and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join, for their common benefit, in one empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connection to render both invincible?

'Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo,
Nec nova regna peto; paribus se legibus ambæ
Invictæ gentes æterna in fœdera mittant.' " *

* Æneid, xii. 189. Thus Englished by Conington:—

"I will not force Italia's land
To Teucrian rule to bow;
I seek no sceptre for my hand,
No diadem for my brow:
Let race and race, unquelled and free,
Join hands in deathless amity."

Resolutions embodying the outline of the proposed scheme of Union were moved on the 31st. Fox at this time had absented himself from the House; and the Opposition was led by Sheridan and Charles Grey with much courage and ability. Pitt's chief supporters were the industrious Dundas and the versatile Canning; but the Speaker also delivered a very able speech in favour of the Resolutions. On the different divisions the majorities were 140 to 15 and 149 to 24. In the Lords no division was taken; though both Lord Lansdowne and Lord Moira * spoke against the Minister's scheme. The King was warmly in favour of it. "I only hope," he said to Dundas, "Government is not pledged to anything in favour of the Roman Catholics?" "No," answered the Minister; "it will be a matter for future consideration." The King went on to state his scruples respecting his Coronation Oath; and when Dundas endeavoured to explain that the Oath bound His Majesty only in his executive capacity, but did not affect him as part of the legislature, "None of your Scotch metaphysics," he angrily exclaimed; "none of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr. Dundas!"†

Before we describe the sequence of events which precipitated Pitt from power, it is desirable that we should return to the general course of our narrative, and briefly indicate the principal incidents that marked his

* The arguments of the Opposition will be found in Lord E. Fitzmaurice's 'Life of William Earl of Shelburne,' iii. 553–556; and Lord Holland's 'Memoirs of the Whig Party,' 143–148.

† Stanhope, iii. 178.

administration in England during the period we have just traversed. Every year brought with it new taxes, rendered necessary by the enormous military and naval expenditure. Among these, in the spring of 1796, was one upon wine, which may be mentioned for the sake of the humorous caricature it drew from Gillray. The Minister was well known to be fond of his bottle of port; and Gillray depicts him as Bacchus, with his friend and colleague Dundas* as Silenus, to whom John Bull, with a long face, and both purse and bottle empty, saith:—"Pray, Mr. Bacchus, have a bit of consideration for old John;—you know as how I've emptied my purse already for you; and it's woundedly hard to raise the price of a drop of comfort, now that one's got no money left to pay for it!" Bacchus, from his pipe of wine, which rests upon the Treasury Bench, stammers forth:—"Twenty pounds a t-tun additional duty, i-i-if you d-d-don't like it at that, why t-t-t-then dad and I will keep it all for o-o-our own drinking, so here g-g-goes, old Bu-bu-bull and mouth."† A tax upon dogs likewise called forth the ridicule of the satirist. In one very telling print, Fox and his friends hang suspended from a gallows as "dogs not worth a tax," while the Ministerial partisans, including Burke with "G. R." on his collar, figure as plump and well-fed dogs, "paid for."

A new lustre was thrown upon Pitt's administration

* "Alike the Advocate of North and Wit,
The friend of Shelburne, and the guide of Pitt."
'The Rolliad,' p. 48.

† "The Bull and Mouth," a corruption of Boulogne Mouth, (or Harbour,) was a well-known old tavern sign.

by the great naval victory off Cape St. Vincent (February 14th, 1796); but, in the following year, it was called upon to encounter a terrible danger in the Mutiny of the Channel Fleet. It was suppressed, however, without much bloodshed, and led to important and much-needed improvements in the treatment of our seamen. It is curious that Burke, then near his death, strongly advocated coercive measures, and was opposed to those concessions which the Government considered advisable.* In this we have another proof of his want of the true statesmanlike temper.

The session of 1797 was also marked by an attempt on the part of Pitt, who had recovered from his delusion that the French would soon be driven to make peace by the exhaustion of their resources, to open negotiations with the French Directory. The influence of Bonaparte being in the ascendant, the terms proposed were not such as the British Government could reasonably accept. On the 26th of May, Charles Grey moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the representation of the people. He proposed to increase the county members from 92 to 113, and to admit copyholders and leaseholders for terms of years, as well as the freeholders, to the county franchise. In the boroughs he proposed to substitute for the numerous rights of election, one uniform household franchise. Further, in order to diminish the expense of elections, he suggested that the poll should be taken throughout the whole kingdom at one time. The motion was seconded by Erskine in an admirable

* Life of Wilberforce, ii. 211.

speech, and supported by Fox in one of his finest and most moderate efforts. But Pitt had turned his back upon his former self, on the young and ardent reformer of two years before, and the motion was thrown out by his "mechanical" majority (256 to 91.) It was then that Fox, weary of "fruitless exertions" and "idle talk," seceded from the House to cultivate in the shades of Chiswick the literary pursuits he loved so well."*

The leadership of the Opposition was undertaken, in the absence of Fox, by an able and accomplished barrister, Mr. Tierney, who, though he had not long entered the House of Commons, had already secured an influen-

* At this time Pitt's health gave way under the pressure of continual anxiety and unremitting toil. He suffered much from headaches, and endeavoured to recruit his strength in the healthy air of Holwood. His scanty leisure seems to have been passed in reading the manuscript of Bishop Tomline's 'Exposition of the First of the Thirty-Nine Articles' (though the occupation was not one to refresh a weary brain); and Lord Stanhope ascribes to the same opportunity the following translation of one of Horace's Odes (part of Ode ii. lib. iii., beginning "Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori"):—

"How bless'd, how glorious they who bravely fall,
Their lives devoted, at their country's call!
Death too pursues the coward as he flies;
The dart o'ertakes him, and disgraced he dies.
No mean repulse intrepid Virtue knows;
Spotless and pure her native splendour glows;
No gaudy ensign hers, of borrowed pow'r,
No fame, dependent on the varying hour;
Bow'd to no yoke, her honours are her own,
Nor court the breath of popular renown.
On wing sublime resistless Virtue soars;
And, spurning human haunts and earthly shores,
To those whom godlike deeds forbid to die,
Unbars the gates of Immortality."

tial position. George Tierney was of Irish descent: he was born at Gibraltar in 1761, and educated at Eton and Cambridge with the view of practising at the bar. By the successive deaths of two elder brothers he became sole heir to his father's property; and abandoning his profession, resolved to devote himself to public life. He was first elected for Colchester. In 1796 he was returned for Southwark; and allying himself to the Whig party, at once acquired distinction by his capacity for business and his remarkable debating powers. It is said of him that from the moment he opened his mouth till he sat down, the attention of his hearers never flagged. His style was almost colloquial in its plainness; but he contrived to convey the bitterest sarcasms with a force and directness that went to the quick. His sneer was withering; his irony inimitable. A wide knowledge of the world, and a profound insight into character, raised him far above the level of ordinary debaters. Lord Brougham says of his style of speaking that it seemed so easy and so natural to him as to be always at his command; depending on no happy and almost involuntary flights of fancy, or moods of mind, or any of the other incidents that affect and limit the inspirations of genius; hardly even upon fire caught from an adversary's speech, or an accident in the debate, such as is wont to kindle the eloquence of the greater orators. "He was very effective at all times; at some times of great force indeed. His power of plain and lucid statement was not easily to be surpassed; and this served him in special stead upon questions of finance and trade. His reasoning was equally plain and distinct.

His wit, or his humour, or his drollery, it would be very difficult to describe—nor easy to say how it should be classed. Perhaps, of the three words we have used, in order to be sure of comprehending or hitting it, the second is the most appropriate." Lord Holland bears warm testimony to his financial knowledge, his plain yet lively and agreeable style of speaking, his good sense in business, and his great quickness in repartee, as well as to his pleasant manners in society. Yet with all these excellent qualities he did not succeed as a Minister. It was in Opposition that he seemed most master of himself, and was best able to do justice to his undoubted powers.*

In the winter session of 1797–8, Pitt's budget raised a storm of hostility. It provided for an increase of the taxes on houses, windows, and shops, as well as on carriages, horses, and servants, on a graduated scale, by which the assessment was increased in proportion to the income chargeable. Tierney criticised the Minister's proposals with great severity; and Fox and Sheridan returned to the House to support the assault. Pitt succeeded, however, in carrying them through Parliament by using his compact majority. He then introduced various measures intended to provide for the defence of the country. Among these, a Bill for manning the Navy, by extending the odious and barbarous power of impressment, passed through all its stages in a single day. Tierney objected to this precipitation; whereupon

* Tierney is the "Friend to Humanity," in Canning's celebrated "Knife-grinder," which appeared in the first number of the 'Anti-Jacobin' (November, 1797).

Pitt replied in an irritable mood, accusing him of "a desire to obstruct the defence of the country." Tierney rose to order. "This language," he said, "is surely not Parliamentary. I must appeal to the Chair for protection." The Speaker, instead of interfering to vindicate the freedom of debate, timidly suggested to the great Minister that he should explain his meaning. Pitt uttered a few words which were accepted as an explanation; but an after reference, in the course of the debate, to this supposed explanation brought him again to his feet: "I gave no explanation," he said, haughtily; "because I wished to abide by the words I had used." The result, in accordance with the evil custom of the time, was a challenge from Tierney; and on Sunday, May 27th, the two parties met on Putney Heath. Mr. Pitt was attended by Mr. Dudley Ryder, afterwards Lord Harrowby; Mr. Tierney's second was Mr. George Walpole. The principals took their ground, after the usual preliminaries had been arranged, at the distance of twelve paces, and fired at the same moment; each, fortunately, without effect. A second case of pistols was produced and fired in the same manner; Pitt, however, discharged his pistol in the air.* The seconds then declared the law of honour to be satisfied.

* Addington, the Speaker, was a witness of the duel, taking up a position on a small hill near a gibbet on which the body of Abershaw, a felon, was still suspended. "When I arrived on the hill," he says, "I knew from seeing a crowd looking down into the valley, that the duel was then proceeding. After a time I saw the same chaise which had conveyed Pitt to the spot, mounting the ascent, and riding up to it I found him safe, when he said, 'You must dine with me to-day.'"—'Life of Lord Sidmouth,' i. 205, 206.

"Never," says Lord Holland, "did two men meet more ignorant of the use of their weapons. Mr. Pitt, on being cautioned by his second to take care of his pistols, as they were 'hair triggers,' is said to have held them up, and remarked that 'he saw no hair.' Mr. Tierney's second, General Walpole, leaped over the furze bushes for joy when Mr. Pitt fired in the air. Some time, however, elapsed, and some discussion between the seconds took place, before the affair was finally and amicably adjusted. Mr. Pitt very consistently insisted on one condition, which was in itself reasonable, that he was not to quit the ground without the whole matter being completely terminated. On Mr. Tierney's return home, he related the event to his wife. That lady, who was much attached to her husband, although she saw him safe before her, fainted away at the relation—a strange but not uncommon effect produced by the discovery of events which, known at the time, would have excited strong emotions. The danger to Mr. Tierney had indeed been great. Had Mr. Pitt fallen, the jury of the times would probably have condemned him to exile or death, without reference to the provocation which he had received, and to the sanction which custom had given to the redress he sought."

Pitt gave the following account of an incident which was creditable to neither party, in a letter to his mother, Lady Chatham:—

"You will be glad, I know, to hear from myself, on a subject in which I know how much you will feel interested, and I am very happy to have nothing to tell

that is not perfectly agreeable. The newspapers of to-day contain a short but correct account of a meeting which I found it necessary to have with Mr. Tierney yesterday, on Putney Heath, in consequence of some words which I had used in the House of Commons, and which I did not think it became me to retract or explain. The business terminated without anything unpleasant to either party, and in a way which left me perfectly satisfied with myself and my antagonist, who behaved with great propriety."

It is satisfactory to add that Wilberforce had the manliness to censure both Pitt and his opponent, and to condemn the false code of honour by which they had regulated their conduct.

V.

When the British Parliament assembled at the beginning of 1799, the project of the union of Great Britain and Ireland under a common legislature was recommended to its consideration, as we have already stated, by a message from the Crown. Pitt, in announcing the irrevocable decision of the Government, spoke with great earnestness: "I see the case so plainly," he said, "and I feel it so strongly, that there is no circumstance of apparent or probable difficulty, no apprehension of popularity, no fear of toil or labour that shall prevent me from using every exertion which remains in my power to accomplish the work that is now before us, and on which, I am persuaded, depend the internal tranquillity of Ireland, the interest of the British Empire at large, and the happiness of a great portion of the habitable globe." Pitt's difficulty, however, as he very well knew, did not lie with the British, but the Irish Parliament, which could hardly be expected to receive with much favour a proposal for its own extinction, and for the surrender of Irish independence. Even at the present day the "imperial" idea is not sufficiently powerful in the sister country to reconcile all classes of Irishmen to their position as members, on terms of perfect equality, of our great empire; and in 1799, it hardly existed at all. Ireland had much to gain, and little to lose, by its incorporation with Great Britain; but that

little appealed to the imagination, the historic sentiment of the Irish people; and imagination and sentiment exercise a far more potent influence over the affairs of nations than politicians are apt or willing to believe. "The foremost men in Ireland," says Mr. Massey, "men whose abilities would have raised them to eminence in any country, whose eloquence would have moved any assembly, ancient or modern, and whose patriotism was sincere, had been tempted, but had indignantly refused every offer to betray the independence of their country." That an Imperial Legislature would offer them a wider field for the exercise of their abilities, and provide them with a larger and more distinguished audience for the display of their oratorical powers, was as nothing to them compared with the preservation of Ireland's dignity as a nation. When the Government failed with these, it turned to another class of leading persons—those who had the disposal of the patronage of the Crown. Their answers were dubious and evasive; but the Minister did not fail to understand their purport. He saw that the Union could be carried only in one way, and that way he did not shrink from adopting. He resolved that bribery of every kind, bribery by titles, offices, gifts, and pensions, should be employed, without hesitation and without limit.

For the work that was to be done, Lord Cornwallis, the Irish Viceroy, was not the man. He could negotiate, though reluctantly,—and with how strong a reluctance his correspondence plainly shows,—the offers of peerages and the higher descriptions of bribes to the chief political leaders; but he neither could nor would interfere in the corruption of the press, nor in the "management" of

members of the House of Commons, nor in the "satisfaction" of the wire-pullers and jobbers with whom Irish society abounded. For these purposes was required a person of sufficient power and station to wield the needful authority; a person of infinite tact, address, courage, and composure, yet with not too scrupulous a conscience, or too inconvenient a political fastidiousness; a person who could be trusted to undertake a secret service of this description, and to undertake it heartily as a sure step to official advancement. Pitt found the man he wanted, and the man the work for which he was fit, in Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, then a handsome young politician of thirty, distinguished for his personal courage, his attractive manners, and his energy of disposition. He was the son of an Irish gentleman who had been rewarded for his political loyalty, in 1797, with the earldom of Londonderry. Born at Mount Stewart, in the county of Down, on the 18th of June, 1769, Robert Stewart received his early education at the grammar-school of Armagh, whence he was transferred to St. John's College, Cambridge. The assiduity and personal intrepidity which he there displayed he displayed also in the House of Commons. Elected, in 1789, member for the county of Down, he joined the Opposition, and vigorously espoused the cause of Parliamentary Reform; but during the viceroyalty of Lord Camden, took up new ground as a supporter of the Ministry, and, in 1797, when his father was made a peer, accepted the Irish Keepership of the Privy Seal. He had previously transferred himself to the British Parliament, representing Tregoney from 1794 to 1796, and Oxford in 1796–7; but as an Irish

official he returned to the little Parliament at Dublin, taking his old seat for county Down. During the absence of Mr. Pelham, the Chief Secretary, he acted as his *locum tenens* with great efficiency, and was supposed to have inspired the severe measures by which the rebellion of 1798 was put down. It was natural, therefore, that on the resignation of Mr. Pelham, in November, Lord Castlereagh should be appointed to the vacant Secretaryship. He was in every respect well adapted to discharge the onerous and by no means agreeable duties which devolved upon him at this juncture. He was a fluent and ready speaker, though his style was embarrassed by an extraordinary confusion of metaphors and awkwardness of phraseology.* His abilities were considerable; and of his firmness of purpose and strength of will there could be as little question as of his brilliant courage. His position, moreover, as an Irishman of rank and wealth, and his knowledge of the Irish character, were great advantages to him in the conduct of a delicate and complex series of personal negotiations.†

* Here are some specimens:—"The feature on which the question hinged;" "men turning their backs upon themselves;" "sets of circumstances coming up and circumstances going down;" "the constitutional principle wound up in the bowels of the monarchical principle";" the Herculean labour of the honourable member, who will find himself quite disappointed when he has at last brought forth his Hercules."

† "Lord Castlereagh joined to great boldness in action,—great calm and courtesy of manner, long habits of business, and a considerable acquaintance with men collectively and individually. He lived in the world, and was essentially a man of the world; but, on the other hand, he was singularly deficient in literary accomplishments, and also in that concentration of purpose which forms a policy and gives daily consistency and vigour to general plans. His language—ungrammatical, diffuse, and mingling every variety of metaphorical expression—was the ridicule of the

In Lord Brougham's gallery of portraits of men of the third George's reign, few are more incisively drawn than that of Castlereagh :—"Of sober and industrious habits," he says, "and become possessed of business-like talents by long experience, he was a person of the most commonplace abilities. He had a reasonable quickness of apprehension and clearness of understanding, but nothing brilliant, or in any way admirable, marked either his conceptions or his elocution. Nay, to judge of his intellect by his eloquence, we should certainly have formed a very unfair estimate of his perspicacity. For, though it was hardly possible to underrate its extent or comprehensiveness, it was very far from being confused and perplexed in the proportion of his sentences; and the listener who knew how distinctly the speaker could form his plans, and how clearly his ideas were known to himself, might, comparing small things with great, be reminded of the prodigious contrast between the distinctness of Oliver Cromwell's understanding and the hopeless confusion and obscurity of his speech. No man besides ever attained the station of a regular debater in our Parliament with such an entire want of all classical accomplishment, and indeed of all literary provision whatsoever . . . . Such he was in debate; in council

scholar; but the great air with which he rose from the Treasury Bench, threw back his blue coat, and showed his broad chest and white waistcoat, looking defiance on the ranks of the Opposition, won him the hearts of the rank and file of the Government adherents. In affairs, he got through the details of office so as to satisfy the scrupulousness of journalists, but did not put his heart and soul into those details, so as to give them an universal vitality."—Lord Dalling, 'Historical Characters,' ii. 259, 260.

he certainly had far more resources. He possessed a considerable fund of plain sense, not to be misled by any refinement of speculation, or clouded by any powerful actions. He went straight to his point. He was brave politically as well as personally." *

Castlereagh's management of the Union business fully justified the confidence reposed in him by Pitt. He cajoled, or browbeat, or wheedled, or argued, or menaced, according to the conditions of the case, or the character of the men with whom he had to deal. Night after night, in the Irish Parliament, he was the target of the most venomous invectives and the bitterest attacks; he met them all with a splendid imperturbability. He encountered unmoved the fire of Grattan's impetuous oratory. No doubt he degraded the grand project of the incorporation of an empire into an affair of parliamentary tactics; but the fault was not his so much as it was the fault of those who persisted in viewing it in a mercenary sense. No doubt the task was one which a sensitive nature would have rejected; but Castlereagh might plead that sensitiveness could not be allowed to stand in the way of a great service to the State. At all events he succeeded. On the 2nd of August, 1800, the Irish Parliament assembled for the last time, and those who best knew its history must have been least inclined to

* Wilberforce says of him:—"When he was in his ordinary mood, he was very tiresome, so slow and heavy, his sentences only half formed, his matter so confused, like what is said of the French army in the Moscow retreat, when horse, foot, and carriages of all sorts were huddled together, helter-skelter; yet when he was thoroughly warmed and excited, he was often very fine, very statesmanlike, and seemed to rise quite into another man."—*Life*, c. 26.

shed a tear at its demise. The Lord Lieutenant announced the royal assent to the Act of Union; and the fiction of Irish Independence ceased to exist.

In the English Parliament the Articles of Union were proposed early in April. A shadow of opposition was evoked by Charles Grey; but it never assumed any substance. A gradual conviction of both the necessity and the advantageousness of the measure took possession of many, on both sides of the House, who had at first regarded it with doubt or disfavour. It passed the Commons triumphantly; in the Lords, the hostile minority varied from three to twelve. The royal assent was given to the Bill about a month earlier than in Ireland.

The engagements into which the Government had entered with its Irish supporters had then to be fulfilled. So far as these related to places, pensions, and titles, no difficulty arose, and they were all, or nearly all, carried out. But the most important, and that which had ensured the co-operation, or, at all events, had disarmed the hostility of the Roman Catholics, the promise distinctly implied, if not actually put into words, that they should be relieved from the penal disabilities under which they unjustly laboured, was not to be so easily discharged. And the attempt to keep it was destined to wreck the Administration by which it had been made.

In a letter from Lord Castlereagh to Pitt, dated the 1st of January, 1801, will be found a very lucid statement of the connection between Catholic Emancipation and Legislative Union.* Lord Castlereagh reminds the

* The letter is too long for our pages. It is given *in extenso* in the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 326, *et seq.*

Premier that, in the autumn of 1799, the Irish Government had informed him that the project of Union could not be carried through the Irish Parliament without the assistance of the Roman Catholic interest, and that this was dependent on an assurance that the Union would tend to a satisfactory settlement of their claims. A Cabinet Council was called to consider this communication, and Castlereagh invited to attend it. The result was, that the opinion of the Cabinet was favourable to a measure of relief; that some doubts were entertained as to the possibility of admitting Catholics into certain of the higher offices; and that Ministers apprehended considerable repugnance to the measure in many quarters, and particularly in the highest; but that, so far as the sentiments of the Cabinet were concerned, the Lord Lieutenant need not hesitate in calling forth the Catholic support in whatever degree he found it practicable to obtain it. Lord Castlereagh goes on to say:—"I certainly did not then hear any direct objections stated against the principle of the measure by any one of the Ministers then present. You will, I have no doubt, recollect that, so far from any serious hesitation being entertained in respect to the principle, it was even discussed whether an immediate declaration on the subject to the Catholics would not be advisable, and whether an assurance should not be distinctly given them in the event of the Union being accomplished, of their objects being submitted with the countenance of Government, to the united Parliament upon a peace. This idea was laid aside principally upon a consideration that such a declaration might alienate the Protestants in both coun-

tries from the Union, in a greater degree than it was calculated to assist the measure through the Catholics; and accordingly the instructions I was directed to convey to Lord Cornwallis were to the following effect: 'That he was fully warranted in "soliciting" every support the Catholics could give, and that, should circumstances render it absolutely necessary, he was again to address the Cabinet on the propriety of giving them a direct assurance." Here, then, was a promise given, and a consideration received. The Government had clearly entered into a compact with the Catholics; and the latter having performed their portion of it, had a right to demand an equal loyalty from the former. Nor until this was done, could the great work they had undertaken be considered as complete. The Union must remain a mockery until the Roman Catholics were placed on equal terms with their Protestant fellow-subjects. Places and pensions might satisfy the hirelings of Government and the tools of "the Castle"; but something larger and more liberal was needed to content a people. It was true that no time had been definitely stated for the crowning of the column. But could any time be more appropriate than the hour of Union? Could any time be more expedient than when England was in arms against a formidable foe, and Ireland in danger of invasion? An act of justice, generosity, and grace, conferred at once and in no carping spirit, would knit more firmly the bonds of Union, and bind the Irish to the Throne by the ties of gratitude and affection.

This was the view which Pitt and Lord Grenville took of the situation; and they addressed themselves

to the preparation of the measure, or rather the series of measures, by which their promise might be fulfilled in its entirety. They designed to attach the Catholic clergy to the State, by making them dependent upon the public funds for a portion of their income. They were of opinion that Catholics should be admitted to office, as well as to the privilege of sitting in Parliament; and that instead of the sacramental test, then notoriously evaded, and insufficient for any effectual purpose, a political test should be imposed indiscriminately on all persons sitting in Parliament, or holding state or corporation offices, as well as on all ministers of religion, of whatever description, all teachers of schools, and the like. "This test," says Lord Grenville,* "was to be directly levelled against the Jacobin principles; was to disclaim in express terms the sovereignty of the people; and was to contain an oath of allegiance and fidelity to the King's Government of the realm, and to the established constitution both in Church and State." How much of this comprehensive and large-minded scheme was due to Lord Grenville, and how much to Pitt, we cannot determine; but it was worthy of both of them, and had it been realised would probably have saved England from the chronic inconvenience, not to say danger, of a disaffected Ireland.

It was approved by the Cabinet; and, in the month of September, made known to the Chancellor, Lord Loughborough,—the crafty and supple Wedderburn,—who saw in it the means of ingratiating himself with

* 'Courts and Cabinets of George the 3rd,' iii. 128, 129.

the King. He at once communicated it to him, and the narrow but conscientious intellect of George the 3rd did not fail to discern in it a supposed inconsistency with the obligations of his Coronation Oath. He had already been predisposed against it by the suggestions of the Archbishop of Armagh and the astute Chancellor. When, therefore, on the 31st of January (1801), Pitt submitted the proposals of the Cabinet in a long and masterly ultimatum, adding that, unless allowed to introduce them into Parliament with the royal assent and the full authority of the Government, he would wish to be released from his official situation, the King, in reply, put forward his Coronation Oath as an unalterable barrier to their acceptance, but suggested, as a compromise, that the subject should be dropped on both sides. Such a compromise was necessarily inadmissible. Pitt made an absolute tender of his resignation, and the King could no longer refuse it.

As his Majesty's repugnance to the Catholic claims was well-known to the Minister, he must have foreseen that the collapse of his Government would be the result of his pressing them. It may be asked, therefore, why he committed himself to such a course. Some writers have sought an explanation in the state of his health, and in the disastrous failure of his war policy. They hint that he desired the conduct of peace negotiations with France to pass into other hands. Our own belief is, that Pitt, but for the energetic action of Lord Grenville, would willingly have postponed the promised settlement. He was in the enjoyment of almost absolute power. The Opposition, however strong in talent, was

numerically so feeble as to be incapable of the effective discharge of the duties of an Opposition. In most matters his strong will had prevailed even over the King's obstinacy. A statesman so avaricious of authority and so absorbed in official work as Pitt, would not voluntarily throw up a position of such unequalled magnificence. But he was overborne by Grenville's resolution; and probably he believed that, though compelled to resign, his exclusion from office would be but temporary. Was he not indispensable? Recalled to power, he would either be free to set aside the Catholic question to be dealt with by another generation, or he would be able to extort from the King a reluctant assent to the proposed settlement.*

The formation of a new Government was entrusted to the Speaker, Henry Addington, a son of Dr. Addington, and a *protégé* of the Pitt family. Pitt encouraged him to undertake the task by a promise of his cordial support. But as most of the Ministers, great and small, retired along with Pitt, the new Premier was compelled to fall back upon men of inferior calibre. In Macaulay's words, he had no other resource than to call up the rear

* The King's feelings on the subject were very strong. Lord Malmesbury states in his *Diary* (Feb. 26th, 1801), that he saw the King at Windsor about the 6th or 7th, when he read the Coronation Oath to his family, asked if they understood it, and remarked, "If I violate it, I am no longer legal sovereign of this country, but it falls to the House of Savoy,"—a fiction suggested to him, perhaps, by Lord Loughborough. General Garth relates that, on one occasion, after having had the Oath read over to him, he exclaimed, "I would rather beg my bread from door to door throughout Europe than consent to any such measure."—PELLEW, 'Life of Lord Sidmouth,' i. 285.

ranks of the old Ministry. "And thus, in an age pre-eminently fruitful of parliamentary talents, a Cabinet was formed containing hardly a single man who in parliamentary talents could be considered as even of the second rate." It was an eminently aristocratic Cabinet; for of its nine members five were peers, three the eldest sons of peers, and the only commoner, strictly speaking, was Addington himself, or "the Doctor," as he was now generally nicknamed. Before he could complete his arrangements, however, the King, whose feeble intellect, shaken by the Coronation Oath mania, had been seriously affected by the ministerial crisis, fell ill, and his life was even in danger. "I am better now," he said in one of the intervals of his paroxysms, "but I will remain true to the Church." Apprehensions were entertained of a revival of the Regency squabbles; but happily these were set at rest by the King's speedy recovery. The new Ministry was then installed in office. There is reason to believe that, at the last moment, Pitt would gladly have resumed the reins; but George the 3rd had never cordially liked his imperious Minister, and was too well pleased with the more flexible Addington to agree to a restoration of the *status quo.* Fox, in a letter to Lord Holland, writes:—"If the Speaker is employed, as is said, to make a new arrangement, it must be indeed a notorious juggle, and it seems to me not unlikely that it will proceed thus. The Speaker will converse with some men of consequence, possibly Grey or others, and will report that he cannot find it practicable to make a Ministry upon the principle of rejecting the Catholic claims, etc., and then Pitt will

be restored, and the King will submit."* But Fox underrated the King's power of resistance, nor did he rightly understand the character of Addington, who, like most weak men, was obstinate and self-confident, and having unexpectedly attained to the highest office in the State was by no means inclined to surrender it. Still, to every person who clearly understood the critical circumstances of the country, the prospect of a feeble Government was sufficiently alarming. The general feeling seems very clearly expressed in a forcible caricature by Gillray, entitled 'Lilliputian Substitutes.' Here Lord Loughborough's huge wig almost conceals from view his successor in the Chancellorship, Lord Eldon.† Next to it, on the Treasury Bench, is seen "Mr. Pitt's jack-boot," with Addington immersed in it chin-deep; yet stolidly convinced that it and all Pitt's clothes exactly fit him. "Well, to be sure," he exclaims," these here clothes do fit me to an inch!—and now that I have got upon this bench, I think I may pass muster for a fine tall fellow, and do as well for a corporal as my old master Billy himself." The new Foreign Secretary, Lord Hawkesbury, who, in debate, had used some wild talk about marching to Paris, wraps his attenuated figure in Lord Grenville's ample breeches. "Mercy upon me!" he cries; "what a deficiency is here!—ah, poor Hawkie! what will be the consequence

* 'Memorials of Fox,' iii. 188.

† Loughborough, notwithstanding his servility on the Catholic question, had not secured the confidence of the King, who afterwards, on hearing of his death, exclaimed, "He has not left behind him a greater knave in my dominions."

if these d—d breeches should fall off in the march to Paris, and then I should be found out a *sans-culotte !*" Lord Hobart, the Colonial Secretary, wields "Mr. Dundas's broadsword!" Another individual, of formidable proportions, finds fault with the "old slippers" of George Canning:—"Ah, d—n his narrow pumps! I shall never be able to bear them long on my corns!—Zounds! are these shoes fit for a man in present pay free quarters?"

Pitt's conduct at this period has drawn forth some severe comments from Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* which in spite of Lord Stanhope's demurrer,† we cannot but consider to be just and well deserved. He observes that it was as unintelligible to those of his contemporaries to whom it was known as it is to us at present. Mr. Abbot (Lord Colchester), Addington's confidential friend, and his successor in the Speakership, remarks in his diary:—"It is still a mystery why Mr. Pitt and his colleagues retired upon a question which they were not pledged upon to any one, which the Roman Catholics did not desire, and which they can now so readily forego." Lord Malmesbury, who lived on terms of intimacy with the great Minister's friend, appears to have been equally perplexed. Sir George Lewis thinks that two adequate motives for Pitt's resignation may be suggested; one, a strong and profound belief in the importance of his policy, and a conviction that by resigning, he should promote its chances of success; the other, an honour-

* Sir G. C. Lewis, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' pp. 211, 212.

† Earl Stanhope, 'Life of Pitt, iii. 310.

able feeling, that having authorised Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh to obtain the Roman Catholic support of the Union by a promise of ulterior relief, he was bound, if the King prevented him from fulfilling his promise, to retire from power. But, then, as Sir George Lewis points out, neither reason can be reconciled with his resignation of office in February because the King refused his consent to Catholic emancipation, and his readiness to resume office in March although the royal concurrence was still withheld. It must be presumed that, after the events of 1788, Mr. Pitt contemplated the possible effect of a political crisis on the King's excitable temperament. "We confess ourselves at a loss to justify," says Sir George Lewis, "and scarcely even to explain, the course which he pursued. Why if he were so willing to remain in March, he was so resolved on resigning in February, or why, if he were so resolved upon resigning in February, he was so willing to remain in March,—we are equally unable to determine. What made Mr. Pitt's conduct the less creditable at this conjuncture was, that he signified his readiness to remain, without consulting some of the most important of his former colleagues, and particularly Lord Grenville, by whom this fact was communicated to Mr. Fox." We have already endeavoured to offer to our readers our humble solution of this curious political problem.

No doubt remains, however, that the King was, as we have said, thoroughly well satisfied with the change. He dubbed Mr. Addington "*my own* Chancellor of the Exchequer" and "*my* Chancellor of the Exchequer"; and, on his recovery, wrote to him in terms of affection

which he had never addressed to "great Chatham's son." "The King," he said, "is highly gratified at the repeated marks of the sensibility of Mr. Addington's heart, which must greatly add to the comfort of having placed him, with so much propriety, at the head of the Treasury. He trusts their mutual affection can only end with their lives." Happy Minister! Most gracious King!

VI.

The Addington Ministry entered upon office as a peace ministry; and their first care was to open negotiations for a separate treaty with France. These, begun in March, were protracted until the autumn; but on the first of October the preliminaries were signed in London, and on the twelfth, the usual ratifications were exchanged. The country, thoroughly weary of the war, and oppressed by a heavy burden of taxation, received the intelligence with infinite satisfaction. In Parliament it was not so favourably regarded. The terms were criticised as dishonourable and degrading. But Pitt approved; * and the support of the Pittites enabled the Ministry to defy opposition, while, necessarily, they received the assistance of Fox and his followers. Pitt, meanwhile, had sold his favourite residence at Holwood; had given up his carriages and horses; retrenched his expenditure; discharged his debts so far as he was able†; and, like a modern Cincinnatus, had retired to the seclusion of Park Place, to economize on an income of less than £1000 a year.

* "Pitt supports most magnanimously," writes Wilberforce, "and assists in every way."

† Though he had been in receipt of an income of £10,000 a year, his debts amounted to £45,000. He had no family to maintain, and he did not gamble; so that the deficiency must be ascribed to the peculation of his servants. The King offered him £30,000; but Pitt declined the gift. He accepted, however, a sum of £11,700, subscribed by his friends.

The treaty of Amiens was signed in February, 1802. France agreed to withdraw her forces from Southern Italy, and to leave the new republics which Bonaparte had created to take care of their own fortunes. England undertook to surrender all her newly conquered colonies, with the exception of Ceylon, and even to give up Malta, the key of the Mediterranean, to its former possessors, the Knights of St. John. The peace was one of which everybody was glad, and nobody proud; but for a time the sense of relief from a prolonged and costly struggle prevailed over the feeling that most of its dearly purchased trophies had been abandoned. It was soon evident, however, that Bonaparte had agreed to the treaty only in order to gain time for fresh military preparations; and English statesmen found themselves being drawn into a new contest, which would be one for self-preservation and national independence. The errors and even crimes of the leaders of the French Revolution were many, but at least they had sincerely desired to ensure the freedom of nations; and their ideas, however mistaken, did not lack a certain element of generosity. But Napoleon sought to revive the sanguinary despotism of a Genghiz Khan. He aimed at making all Europe the pedestal of his selfish glory. He laughed at national rights, and set his foot upon popular liberties. Neither his word nor his oath could bind him. He made treaties with the deliberate intention of violating them as soon as they had been signed. The stipulations to which he had agreed at Amiens were openly set at nought as soon as he had reorganised his armies. In spite of the temperately worded remonstrances of the British Govern-

ment, he decreed the annexation of both Parma and Piedmont; and despatched a French force to occupy Switzerland. To prepare the way for war with England, he suddenly demanded the expulsion of the refugees who had been sheltered by the ægis of Great Britain since the outbreak of the Revolution; and called for the surrender of Malta, which it was known he was preparing to seize. And he accumulated immense armaments in the French ports, with no other object apparently than the invasion of England, as soon as he found it convenient to begin hostilities.

Meanwhile, the Addington Ministry, feeble from its very birth, grew weaker daily. It was exposed to the attacks of the Foxites, of the Grenvilles, of the Windhamites, of the young Pittites, headed by George Canning, while Pitt's co-operation became more fitful and constrained. Probably no English administration was ever so pelted with lampoons; and unquestionably in the inefficiency of Addington, the timidity of Hawkesbury, and the prevailing mediocrity of their colleagues, there was ample material for the wits. The country rang with laughter at the 'Ode to the Doctor' and 'The Grand Consultation:'—

> "If the health and strength, and the pure vital breath
> Of old England at last must be *doctored* to death,
> Oh! why must we die of one doctor alone?
> And why must that doctor be just such an one
> As Doctor Henry Addington!"

Still more provocative of mirth was Sheridan's witty adaptation of one of Martial's best-known epigrams:—

"I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But this I'm sure I know full well,
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell."

To a different feeling Canning appealed in his vigorous lyric of "The Pilot that weathered the Storm"; a lyric open, no doubt, to criticism both in its statements and its language, but admirably adapted to arouse the popular spirit: —

"If hushed the loud whirlwind that ruffled the deep,
The sky if no longer dark tempests deform,
When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?
No—here's to the pilot that weathered the storm.

"At the footstool of Power let Flattery fawn!
Let Faction her idol extol to the skies;
To Virtue in humble retirement withdrawn,
Unblamed may the accents of gratitude rise!

"And shall not *his* memory to Britain be dear,
Whose example with envy all nations behold?
A statesman unbiass'd by int'rest or fear,
By power uncorrupted, untainted by gold!

"Who, when terror and doubt through the universe reigned,
While rapine and treason their standards unfurled,
The hearts and the hopes of his country maintained,
And our kingdom preserved 'mid the wreck of the world!

"Unheeding, unthankful, we bask in the blaze,
While the beams of the sun in full majesty shine
When he sinks into twilight with fondness we gaze,
And mark the mild lustre that gilds his decline.

"So, Pitt, when the course of thy greatness is o'er,
Thy talents, thy virtue, we fondly recall;
Now justly we praise thee, when lost we deplore;
Admired in thy zenith, but loved in thy fall.

"O! take them—for dangers by wisdom repelled,
For evils by courage and constancy braved—
O! take for a throne by thy counsels upheld,
The thanks of a people thy firmness has saved!

"And O! if again the rude whirlwind should rise,
The dawning of peace should fresh darkness deform,
The regrets of the good and the fears of the wise
Shall turn to the Pilot that weather'd the storm."

"The Pilot" took no part in the proceedings of Parliament during the session of 1802. He had approved of the peace, but much that was done by the Addington Incapables did not satisfy him; and to avoid assuming an attitude of hostility, he maintained a frigid silence. He was preparing, we believe, for a ministerial crisis, which he knew could not be long delayed, when once "the Doctor" was deprived of his powerful support. In the month of November, Canning, always eager to pluck the fruit before it was ripe, drew up a memorial for presentation to Addington and Pitt, requesting the former, in the interest of the country, to retire and make way for the latter. Pitt, and even Lord Grenville, were at this time disposed, in consideration of the King's infirmity, to accept office without insisting upon the concession of the Catholic claims. But they were not willing that a change of ministry should be effected by any movement which their adversaries could fairly describe as a cabal or an intrigue. They saw clearly enough that the time was rapidly approaching, when Addington himself would be forced to solicit the ex-premier's assistance, or the nation would demand his return to power as the only statesman capable of coping with the gathering tempest.

In March, 1803, the military preparations in France and Holland assumed proportions which the British Government could not ignore; and measures were accordingly taken for putting the army and navy on a war footing. An insult offered by Bonaparte to the British Ambassador at Paris fanned the warlike feeling which had been steadily rising in the country; and a menace of invasion kindled it into a flame. The dilatoriness and incapacity of the Government provoked the greatest indignation. "Addington," exclaims Wilberforce, "stands on a precipice." Pitt shared in the dissatisfaction. "The Army of Reserve Bill passed," writes Wilberforce; "Pitt attended constantly; in the main behaving well, but once saying something towards Addington which indicated ill-nature and contempt." In the autumn, Dean Milner writes from Cambridge: "The Ministry are everywhere, but particularly here, thought weak on the whole, but exceedingly well-intentioned. 'Good intentions' do not avail much in a great crisis! I am sure," he continues, "nothing would give so much general satisfaction as a junction between Pitt and Addington; Pitt's vigour and Addington's discretion would please exceedingly." "The general opinion," remarks Wilberforce, in December, "of Government is, that it is sadly blundering and inefficient. Yet people are afraid of the old set entire. Windham and Co. strong in opposition. Fox manifestly drawing towards them. 'Tis said Sheridan tried to pique him by saying, 'You will get Pitt in again if you oppose.' He peevishly says, 'I can't bear fools, anything but fools.'" *

* 'Life of Wilberforce' pp. 238–243.

Early in the year some negotiations had taken place between Addington and Pitt, and they met in conference at Bromley Hill in April. Pitt insisted on an entire reconstruction of the Government, and the inclusion of Lord Grenville, Lord Melville, Lord Spencer, and Mr. Windham. Addington, on the other hand, simply desired to strengthen his own Ministry by the accession of Pitt, and was unprepared to sacrifice his old colleagues. However, he submitted Pitt's proposals to the Cabinet and to the King, and by both they were rejected. Thenceforward occurred that gradual alienation of the ex-premier from his former *protégé* of which Wilberforce takes notice.

The last days of 1803 were days of ill-omen for the Addington Government, whose reputation seemed to fall as rapidly as the falling leaves, until they were bare as trees stripped by the winter-blast. They were a Cabinet of Mediocrities; and it is no wonder that orators in Parliament and satirists out of Parliament levelled at them the public laughter. They made much of their moderation, but, unfortunately, their abilities were as moderate as their measures; and they vaunted their good intentions, but unfortunately their good intentions never assumed the shape of deeds. Upon the head of Addington, as the chief of this moderate and well-intentioned Ministry, fell the arrows of scorn. A contemporary rhymester addressed him thus:—

> "Others, with necromantic skill,
> May bind men's passions to their will,
> Raise with dark spells the tardy loan,
> To shake the vaunting Consul's throne;

In them no magic arts surprise,
No tricks to cheat our wondering eyes;
On thee shall no suspicion fall,
Of sleight of hand, or cup and ball;
E'en foes must own thy spotless fame,
Unbranded with a conjuror's name!
Ne'er shall thy virtuous thoughts conspire
To wrap majestic Thames in fire! . . . .
Hail, then, on whom our state is leaning,
O Minister of mildest meaning!
Blest with such virtues to talk big on,
With such a head (to hang a wig on),
Head of wisdom and of candour,
Happy Britain's guardian gander!"

Canning, in his song of "Moderate Men and Moderate Measures," was not less severe :—

"Praise to placeless, proud ability,
Let the prudent muse disdain;
And sing the statesman—all civility—
Whom moderate talents raise to fame.
He, no random projects urging,
Makes us wild alarms to feel;
With moderate measures gently purging
Ills that prey on Britain's weal . . . .
Splendid talents are deceiving,
Tend to counsels much too bold;
Moderate men we prize, believing
All that glitters is not gold."

In an epigrammatic couplet, Canning applied the rule of three to the comparative ability of the two Ministers :—

"Pitt is to Addington,
As London is to Paddington."

Some block-houses being in course of construction to

fortify the approaches of the Thames, the ceaseless satirist wrote :—

> "If *blocks* can from danger deliver,
> Two places are safe from the French;
> The one is the mouth of the river,
> The other the Treasury Bench."

In a free state ridicule is unquestionably a powerful instrument of attack. The majority of persons are always seeking an excuse to avoid the formation of an independent judgment, and are very apt to conclude that the men or measures constantly laughed at are deserving of the laughter. A strong Ministry may succeed in wearing out the attacks of its light-armed assailants by the patience which springs from a well-assured confidence of strength; and in such an event the opinions of the majority will eventually veer round in their favour. But the feeble show, by their hesitation and timidity, how keenly the arrows wound them; and by this weakness seem to justify the public depreciation. Hence the Addington Government was at once discouraged and discredited by the lampoons so mercilessly directed at them; and Lord Liverpool was not wrong in saying that they were laughed out of power and place.

The breach between them and Pitt widened perceptibly; and as it widened, Pitt found himself inclining towards Fox, who resented not less keenly than himself the ministerial incompetency. We find the Whig leader writing at one time,—"The insipidity of the House of Commons is beyond conception, and I think it is catching; for the few times I have thought myself obliged to speak, I felt some way as if I was speaking like

Addington, and I believe I was" . . . "If one is to attend [the House], it would certainly be a great relief to one's mind to allow oneself to abuse Addington's pompous nonsense as it deserves: it really is, on all occasions, both trifling and serious, disgusting, in point of taste, to a degree almost intolerable." Another circumstance tended to bring nearer together the two illustrious rivals, who, some twenty years before, had fought side by side against Lord North, and in defence of constitutional principles. Fox was beginning to abandon his dream of the nobleness of Bonaparte's aims, and to feel that the war on which England was now entering had been forced upon her by the ambition of a selfish despot. When, therefore, in January, 1804, the Grenvilles invited him to join in a systematic effort to procure the removal of Addington, he felt no difficulty in acceding. He was at least nearer to the Grenvilles in his ideas of a patriotic policy than to Addington. And, at all events, when the ship of the State was labouring in a tumultuous sea, with stormy blasts whistling through her torn rigging, his first duty, everybody's first duty, was to see that the helm was placed in firm and able hands. Pitt, however, refused to join the confederacy, from a fear that it might trammel his future action.

The difficulties of all parties were seriously complicated by the return in February of the King's malady. At one time his life was in danger,—and when he recovered his bodily health, his mental derangement continued so long that the appointment of a Regent was seriously contemplated. The task of the Opposition thus became one of infinite delicacy; it was almost im-

possible for them to aim at the removal of the Ministry when the King was not in a condition to follow the course of political events. Lord Grenville tersely explains the embarrassment of the situation:—"If the state of public affairs were such," he writes,* "as would allow of our postponing the whole question, most willingly would I lend him [the King] my assistance (without his knowing I did so) for warding off from him the difficulties of such a scene. But this I know is impossible. To trust the country for another year, in such times as these, to such management as we are now under, would be, in all reasonable calculations, inevitable ruin; and if, in measuring one's conduct upon such a subject, one could look to the King's health alone, the only possible means of securing his peace of mind is to do the best for guarding the Kingdom against the dangers now ready to burst upon us, and which, if not better provided against than they now are, must, when they come, infallibly overthrow his reason in the first instance, but probably, with that, destroy himself, his family, and his kingdom." Acting upon these principles, the Opposition renewed their attacks upon Addington; and Pitt also descended into the arena, not in concert with them, but fighting for his own hand. He began the campaign by a motion on the state of the Navy, and was supported by Fox and the Grenvilles. But Sheridan and the Prince of Wales's party aided the Ministry, so that he was left in a minority of 71. The debate was noticeable for his fierce attack upon Sheridan:—"Among the many assaults," he said, "which I have had to repel

* 'Courts and Cabinets of George the 3rd,' iii. 350.

this evening, was one from a very brilliant flash of lightning, a meteor which for some time has moved neither on the one side nor on the other; a meteor whose absence all may with me have regretted; a meteor which, on its return, concentrating its force, has fixed its rays of resentment and indignation against me—but in whose blazing face * I can look without fear or dread. No insinuations, however bitter or cold, will ever induce me to surrender my freedom in this House. I am fully determined not to renounce my privileges as a member of Parliament."

After Easter, hostilities were resumed; and on the third reading of an Irish Militia Bill, when Fox and the Grenvilles coalesced with Pitt, the ministerial majority was reduced to 21.† Addington, in a state of great alarm and distress, entered into communication with Pitt, desiring to learn his views on the condition of public affairs and the best mode of conducting the Government. Pitt refused to accept the proffered olive-branch; but expressed his willingness to discuss the formation of a new Ministry with any person commissioned by the King for that purpose. Eldon was the intermediary chosen,‡ and through him Pitt sent an

* An undignified allusion to the wine-crimsoned countenance of Sheridan.

† This, in later times, has been considered a very fair majority; but in the days of nomination boroughs it was regarded as virtually a defeat.

‡ Wilberforce writes that he had an interview with Lord Eldon, who was open, cordial, and generous, saying, "that he had told Pitt how much he wished to see him and Addington united, that he could not conceive any man in such times as these had a right to think of anything but the country, and my poor old master there, pointing to Buckingham House."—*Life*, p. 247. See also Twiss's 'Life of Lord Eldon,' i. 438–442.

unsealed letter to be laid before the King, in which he avowed his opposition to the Government, and his intention of supporting Fox in a motion he was to bring forward respecting the defences of the country. This motion came before the House on the 23rd of April, but was rejected by a majority of 52. Two days later Pitt opposed the order of the day for going into committee on a Government bill, objecting to the Government plan of defence, and explaining one of his own. The division gave him 203 votes against 240. Convinced that he could not much longer struggle against so formidable an Opposition, Addington resigned. The event was commemorated in a caricature by Gillray, entitled, "The Confederated Coalition; or, The Giants storming Heaven, with the Gods alarmed for their Everlasting Abodes," in which the Titans of the ancient mythology, headed by Pitt, Fox, and Grenville, are seen advancing triumphantly to the attack of Olympus, which is feebly guarded by Addington, Lord St. Vincent, and Lord Hawkesbury.

Pitt was now requested to form a new Government, and the proposal he submitted to the King was based on a fair representation of all political parties. The King had parted very reluctantly with Addington, and with equal reluctance had accepted Pitt.* But his refusal

* To Lord Eldon, on May 5th, he addressed the following private note:—"The King is much pleased with *his* excellent Chancellor's note: he doubts much whether Mr. Pitt will, after weighing the contents of the paper delivered this day to him by Lord Eldon, choose to have a personal interview with his Majesty; but whether he will not rather prepare another essay, containing as many empty words and little information as the one he had before transmitted."—*Life*, i. 463.

to admit Mr. Fox was definite. We cannot help thinking that Pitt was not greatly concerned at the refusal; and he certainly made no effort to overcome the King's obstinacy. He may have felt, and we believe he *did* feel, that two suns cannot shine in one hemisphere; that there was not room in the same Cabinet for himself and Fox. He accordingly communicated to Fox and Lord Grenville the result of his negotiations. The former replied in a very generous tone. He was too old, he said, to feel any particular anxiety for office; but that he had many friends who for years had faithfully followed him. He should advise them to join the Government, and hoped that Pitt would provide them with places. He had previously written to Mr. Grenville to the effect that he did not wish to stand in the way of any arrangement, and that he hoped his exclusion would not prevent either the Grenvilles or his own friends from accepting office. But Lord Grenville, while appreciating this disinterestedness, felt bound in honour to resent Fox's exclusion, and addressed to Pitt a very remarkable letter. After announcing the decision of himself and his friends not to enter the new Administration, he continued:—"No consideration of personal ease or comfort, no apprehension of responsibility, or reluctance to meet the real situation into which the country has been brought, have any weight in this decision: nor are we fettered with any engagements on the subject, either expressed or implied; we rest our determination solely on our strong sense of the impropriety of our becoming parties to a system of government which is to be formed at such a moment as the present on a principle of ex-

clusion. It is unnecessary to dwell on the mischiefs which have already resulted from placing the great offices of government in weak and incapable hands. We see no hope of any effectual remedy of these mischiefs, but by uniting in the public service 'as large a proportion as possible of the weight, talents, and character, to be found in public men of all descriptions, and without any exception. This opinion I have already had occasion to express to you in the same words, and we have for some time been publicly acting in conformity to it; nor can we, while we remain impressed with that persuasion, concur in defeating an object for which the circumstances of the present times afford at once so strong an inducement, and so favourable an occasion. An opportunity now offers such as this country has seldom seen for giving to its government, in a moment of peculiar difficulty, the full benefit of the services of all those who, by the public voice and sentiment, are judged most capable of contributing to its prosperity and safety. The wishes of the public on this subject are completely in unison with its interests, and the advantages, which not this country alone, but all Europe and the whole civilized world, might derive from the establishment of such an Administration, at such a crisis, would probably have exceeded the most sanguine expectations." *

The advisability of such a coalition as Lord Grenville had recommended is admitted by Lord Stanhope. It would have been an inestimable advantage to have

* 'Courts and Cabinets of George the 3rd,' iii. 352, 353.

strengthened the Government with a statesman of Fox's genius and renown. For such an object, he says, it was wise and patriotic to fling aside the paltry recollections of past animosity and party discord. Again, between the proposed coalition of 1804 and that of 1783 no resemblance can be traced. The latter involved questions of domestic policy on which considerable difference of opinion could not but arise. In 1804 the reverse was the case. Everything had to be put aside in the face of an overwhelming danger, a war of life and death with the greatest military power in Europe. "Who would desire," asks Lord Stanhope, "to wrangle about Reform in Parliament or to nibble at the Treason and Sedition Bills, when Bonaparte, with a hundred thousand of the best troops of Europe, was encamped at Boulogne?" This question, as it seems to us, effectually disposes in itself of the defence Lord Stanhope attempts of Pitt's conduct in calmly acquiescing in the King's unconstitutional exclusion of the Whig leader.* That defence turns on two points: first, the state of the King's health; and second, the King's alternative of another Addington ministry. Now it is obvious that the King's health could not outweigh the vital consideration of the national safety. Moreover, it could not have suffered from Fox in 1804 more than in 1806, and it would not have suffered. George the 3rd always knew when resistance

* "The King's personal repugnance to Mr. Fox frustrated our arrangement which, by uniting the more liberal section of the Tories with the Whigs, would have constituted an enlightened party,—progressive in its policy, and directed by the ablest statesmen of the age."—Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History,' ii. 41.

became impossible. On the second point it may be observed that if the King had recalled Addington, he could not have held his ground even for the briefest period; and the Coalition would have been successful after all. The true explanation of Pitt's conduct is to be found in Lord Stanhope's admission that he was determined to be First Lord of the Treasury and Prime Minister, while he knew that Fox, on the other hand, wished the office to be held by some neutral person. Pitt's motto was *Aut Cæsar aut nullus;* and we cannot doubt but that the King's action relieved him from a great difficulty, the difficulty of opening a negotiation with Fox in which the very first condition would have been inadmissible.

The Ministry which Pitt proceeded to form was, himself excepted, very little stronger than Addington's. In fact, it included no fewer than six of Addington's late colleagues, namely, Lord Eldon, Chancellor; Duke of Portland, President of the Council; Lord Westmoreland, Privy Seal; Lord Chatham, Master of the Ordnance; Lord Castlereagh, President of the Board of Control; and Lord Hawkesbury, Home Secretary. The new appointments included Lord Harrowby, Foreign Secretary; Lord Camden, War and Colonial Secretary; Lord Melville, Admiralty; Duke of Montrose, Board of Trade; and Lord Mulgrave, Duchy of Lancaster. It is noticeable that Castlereagh and Mr. Pitt himself were the only two members of the House of Commons in the Cabinet. Canning became Treasurer of the Navy, but he deplored the exclusion of Fox and Grenville.

The weakness of the Ministry was soon apparent in

the House of Commons, where the majorities it obtained on several important divisions were actually less than those which had induced Addington to resign. They were confronted by the Foxites, the Grenvilles, and Addington and his personal friends; and Pitt's only effective debater in the Commons was the brilliant but too impetuous Canning. His position was, in truth, an indefensible one as the head of a Ministry he had largely assisted to overthrow, and whose policy he had visited with the most contemptuous censure. To this painful strait he had been reduced, as Sir George Lewis says,* by his own conduct; whereas, powerful as he had been in government, he might, had he acted with more openness, resolution, and straightforwardness, have been still more powerful in Opposition, and, uniting with Fox and Lord Grenville, have dictated his own terms to the King and Addington. "When Demosthenes was asked what was the first, and second, and third qualification of an orator, he answered 'Delivery'; in like manner, if we were asked what is the first, and second, and third qualification of an English statesman, we would answer, 'Intelligibility.' As in oratory the most eloquent words and the wisest counsels will avail but little if they are not impressed in voice and manner on the mind of an audience; so integrity and public spirit will fail to command confidence, if the course adopted is intricate and inexplicable."

That Pitt's conduct was fairly capable of a very unfavourable construction, is apparent from the criticism

* Sir G. C. Lewis, 'British Administrations,' p. 253.

upon it which he drew from Sheridan by an imprudent reference to his support of Addington. "He represents it," said Sheridan, "as an insidious and hollow support. I say I gave it with the most perfect good faith. But supposing I had not supported him with firmness and fidelity—what then? I never had professed to do so, either to that Administration or to this House. I supported them because I approved of many of their measures; but principally was I induced to support them because I considered their continuance in office a security against the return to power of the right honourable gentleman opposite, which ever appeared to me as the greater national calamity. If, indeed, *I* had recommended the noble lord * to his Majesty, if I had come down to the House and described him as the fittest man in the country to fill the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, because it was a convenient step to my own safety, in retiring from a situation which I could no longer fill with honour; if, having seduced him into that situation, I had afterward tapered off from a prominent support when I saw that the minister of my own choice was acquiring greater stability and popularity than I wished for; if, when I saw an opening to my own return to power, I had entered into a combination with others, whom I meant also to betray, from the sole lust of power and office, in order to remove him; and if, under the dominion of these base appetites, I had then treated with ridicule and contempt the very man whom I had before held up

* Sheridan's speech was made after Addington had been created Viscount Sidmouth.

to the choice of my Sovereign, and the approbation of this House and the public, then, indeed, I should have merited the contempt of all good men, and should have deserved to be told that I was hollow and insincere in my support, and had acted a mean and perfidious part."

Before the end of the year Pitt felt the necessity of obtaining additional support, and turned to seek it in the very quarter which he had taunted Sheridan for favouring. Between him and Addington the worst possible terms had existed for several months. Pitt was contemptuous, and Addington sulky. But Pitt now wanted votes, and Addington wanted place. With the enthusiastic acquiescence of the King, who overflowed delightedly "at the very proper state of Mr. Pitt's mind," and intimated that "none of Mr. Pitt's services to the public had been more predominant than the proposing Mr. Addington, then a young man, for Speaker of the House of Commons," a formal reconciliation was effected (December 23rd). Its suddenness set the world laughing. Only two days before, writes one of the Grenvilles, upon Pitt touching his hat as he passed by Addington, Addington observed to Dyson, who was riding with him, that even that greeting was new to him. Addington was made President of the Council, the Duke of Portland resigning through ill health, and went to the Upper House as Lord Sidmouth; a promotion by which Pitt freed himself from his rival influence in the Commons. His friend, Lord Buckinghamshire, received the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster. Another change was rendered necessary by the illness of

Lord Harrowby,—and his office of Foreign Secretary was given to Lord Mulgrave.*

These arrangements were by no means acceptable to all Pitt's followers, and among others Canning strongly disapproved of them. They were not regarded with much favour by the public; and in the House of Commons they did not bring the accession of strength that Pitt had expected. Early in the session of 1805, the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry issued their celebrated Tenth Report, which brought forward certain facts in reference to an alleged misappropriation of public money by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Melville, when Treasurer of the Navy. Melville was Pitt's "fidus Achates," the confidential friend of many years,† and a blow struck at him was a blow struck at Pitt also. As, even before it was made public, it was known that this report would impugn Melville's conduct, Pitt had looked for its appearance with intense anxiety. Wilberforce was at his office when the report came out, and the Minister was reading it for the first time. "I shall never forget," he says, "the way in which he seized it and how eagerly he looked into the leaves without waiting even to cut them open." The report distinctly charged Mr. Trotter, Lord Melville's deputy-paymaster, with misapplication of the public money under circumstances which seemed to imply the connivance of his principal. Mr. Whitbread, therefore, brought into

* Lord Mulgrave's Under Secretary of State was Robert Plumer Ward, afterwards distinguished as the author of 'Tremaine' and 'De Vere.'

† According to Wilberforce, however, an actual coolness existed between them at this time, and they were "scarcely upon speaking terms."

the House of Commons a motion inculpatory of Melville, which speedily assumed the proportions of a political event. Contrary to Wilberforce's advice, Pitt threw himself into the conflict with great fervour, apparently from a feeling that his own honour had been trifled with.* But he was not able to carry his Cabinet along with him, and Sidmouth threatened to resign if he met the vote of censure with a direct negative. He was willing, however, that it should be proposed to refer the matter to a Select Committee. On the 8th of April the question came up. After Whitbread had stated his case, Pitt submitted his proposition of a Select Committee, and concluded by "moving the previous question" as a technical preliminary. Lord Henry Petty (afterwards third Marquis of Lansdowne) supported Whitbread, and was followed on the same side by Fox and George Ponsonby. The defence was undertaken by Spencer Perceval, Canning, and Castlereagh; but it did not satisfy the independent members, who were bound by no strict party allegiance, and they turned for guidance

* "Some years before, Mr. Raikes (*a*) had hinted to him that the public money was illegally employed. Dundas soon after coming in, Pitt said to him at once, 'Dundas, here has been Tom Raikes with a long story of your way of employing the public money; what does he mean?' Dundas assured him that it was a mistake, and that no money had been drawn except for public service. When, therefore, the facts came out, Pitt seemed to a degree involved in Melville's fault. He was, however, 'quite sure that there was no real pocketing of public money.' Pitt fancied himself bound in honour to defend one who had so long acted with him."—'Life of Wilberforce,' p. 262.

(*a*) The Governor of the Bank of England.

to Wilberforce, whose rigid conscientiousness was rightly estimated. In his judgment, the accuser had made out his case; and honestly, though reluctantly, he rose to press the claims of justice. He sat in a line with the Treasury Bench, and as he turned to address the Speaker, looked just across Mr. Pitt, who was watching with intense eagerness for some intimation of the line he would take. "It required no little effort to resist the fascination of that penetrating eye, from which Lord Erskine was always thought to shrink." But he stated forcibly his impression of Lord Melville's fault, and reminded the House of the importance of basing its decision on the strictest grounds of justice. His adverse opinion had a great effect, and on a division the numbers were 216 to 216. The Speaker (Abbot, a friend of Addington's) gave his casting vote against Government.*

A few days afterwards Pitt informed the House that Lord Melville had resigned his post as First Lord of the Admiralty; and he subsequently stated, not without emotion, that he had advised the King to remove him from the Privy Council. At first it was intended to

* Lord Fitzharris, afterwards second Earl of Malmesbury, writes:—"I have ever thought that an abiding cause of Pitt's death, certainly one that tended to shorten his existence, was the result of the proceedings against his old friend and colleague, Lord Melville. I sat wedged close to Pitt himself the night when we were 216 to 216, and the Speaker, Abbot (after looking as white as a sheet, and pausing for ten minutes), gave the casting vote against us. Pitt immediately put on the little cocked hat that he was in the habit of wearing when dressed for the evening, and jammed it deeply over his forehead, and I distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks."—MALMESBURY, 'Diary and Correspondence,' iv. 347.

order him to be proceeded against criminally; but Pitt's influence in the House was sufficient to carry a motion for his impeachment before the House of Lords, by whom he was eventually acquitted. The blow was not, however, the less effective, and it shook Pitt's Ministry seriously. "We can get over Austerlitz," he said afterwards to Huskisson, "but we can never get over the Tenth Report. Such is the nature of Englishmen." The appointment of a successor involved him in much embarrassment. Lord Sidmouth proposed that his friend Lord Buckinghamshire should be First Lord, and that his brother-in-law, Bragge Bathurst, should take Lord Buckinghamshire's place;* but Pitt persisted in appointing Sir Charles Middleton (Lord Barham), a naval officer of much distinction. Thereupon Sidmouth resigned, but some explanations having been exchanged,

* Bragge Bathurst, and Sidmouth's brother Hiley, were, as place-hunters, the frequent objects of Canning's satiric wit. He represents them as bound to applaud their liberal relative and patron :—

"When the faltering periods lag,
Or the House receives them drily,
Cheer, oh cheer him, brother Bragge!
Cheer, oh cheer him, brother Hiley!

"Each a gentleman at large,
Lodged and fed at public charge,
Paying, with a grace to charm ye,
This the fleet, and that the army.

"Brother Bragge and Brother Hiley,
Cheer him! when he speaks so vilely;
Cheer him! when his audience flag,
Brother Hiley, brother Bragge."

—See 'Ode to the Doctor.'

withdrew the resignation. The question of Lord Melville's impeachment, however, revealed further differences of opinion; and Sidmouth again tendered his resignation, which, this time, was accepted. He was followed in his retirement by Lord Buckinghamshire; and Pitt, worn, anxious, and in ill-health, brought the disastrous session to a close on the 12th of July. In addition to the Melville scandal, it had been distinguished by a revival of the movement for Catholic Emancipation. In the Lords the proposition was introduced by Lord Grenville, who, however, could muster only 40 peers in its favour against a hostile majority of 178. In the Commons it was brought forward by Fox in one of his most powerful speeches. He was supported by Henry Grattan, the Irish orator, with great effect,* and opposed by Pitt. The division showed 124 for, and 336 against, Fox's motion.

Looking round on the troubled condition of Europe, keenly conscious of the difficulties that threatened the country, and not ignorant of the "balanced state of public feeling," the Minister, as the year ran out, grew anxious to effect a coalition with Fox and Lord Grenville. His sense of its necessity he represented to the

* It was Grattan's maiden speech in the Imperial Parliament; and it was for some minutes doubtful whether the House would laugh at him or cheer, owing to his strange gestures and extravagant attitudes. But when the Ministerial party, who watched Pitt, their thermometer, for their cue, saw him repeatedly give his stately nod of approbation, they took the hint from their huntsman, and broke out into the most rapturous cheers. See 'Life of Lord Byron,' by Moore, p. 185 (edit. 1873). Byron says that Grattan would have been near his ideal of an orator but for "his harlequin delivery.'

King; and when his first communication on the subject was unfavourably received, he endeavoured at a personal interview to overcome the royal repugnance. The interview lasted three hours; but finding the King impracticable, the baffled Minister refrained from further pressure lest he should provoke an attack of his malady. This disappointment was followed by another, which foiled Pitt's gigantic efforts to arrest Napoleon's conquering progress by an European combination. The news of the surrender of General Mack and the Austrian army at Ulm (October 19th), affected him deeply. "Pitt and Lord Mulgrave," says Lord Malmesbury,* "came to me with a Dutch newspaper in which the capitulation of Ulm was inserted at full length. As they neither of them understood Dutch, and as all the offices were empty, they came to me to translate it, which I did as well as I could; and I observed but too clearly the effect it had on Pitt, though he did his utmost to conceal it. This was the last time I saw him. The visit left an indelible impression on my mind, as his manner and look were not his own, and gave me, in spite of myself, a foreboding of the loss with which we were threatened." The tidings, which arrived a few days later, of Nelson's crowning victory of Trafalgar revived the Minister's spirits; though saddened as that victory was by the great admiral's death, it awakened, so to speak, a double current of emotion.† But this momentary gleam of

* Lord Malmesbury, 'Diaries and Correspondence,' iv. 340.

† "One day in November, 1805," says Lord Fitzharris, "I happened to dine with Pitt, and Trafalgar was naturally the engrossing subject of our conversation. I shall never forget the eloquent manner in which he

triumph was followed by the gloom of Austerlitz, the battle which crushed Austria beneath the iron will of Napoleon.* To Pitt's enfeebled frame this proved a death-blow. Had he been in stronger health, no doubt he might have withstood the shock; for, in spite of all that poets tell us, the robust intellect and the manly heart are seldom overcome by external adversities. But Pitt was already yielding to the effects of hereditary disease, and the excessive use of port wine as a remedy and a stimulant. He was at Bath, drinking the waters, when the news arrived; and the mental anxiety which it caused seems to have driven the gout from the extremities to attack some vital organ. He fell into a debility, which rapidly increased; so rapidly, that his journey from Bath to his villa at Putney occupied him three days. It it said that on leaving his carriage, and as he moved along the passage to his bedroom, he observed a map of Europe hanging from the wall. Turning to his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, he mournfully said, "Roll up that map; it will not

described his conflicting feelings when roused in the night to read Collingwood's despatches. He observed that he had been called up at various hours in his eventful life by the arrival of news of various hues; but whether good or bad, he could always lay his head on his pillow, and sink into sound sleep again. On this occasion, however, the great event announced brought with it so much to weep over as well as to rejoice at, that he could not calm his thoughts; but at length got up, though it was three in the morning."—Lord Malmesbury, 'Diaries,' iv. 342.

* Previously, at the Lord Mayor's Dinner, Pitt had made a brief and striking speech:—"I return you many thanks," he said, "for the honour you have done me; but Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example."

be wanted these ten years." The day after his return (Sunday, January 12th, 1806), he wrote to Lord Wellesley, so wholly unconscious was he of immediate danger:—"I am recovering rather slowly from a series of stomach complaints, followed by severe attacks of gout, but I believe I am now in the way of real amendment." On the following day, Monday, he went out for an airing in his carriage, and again on Tuesday;—which was the last time he left his house alive. He was well enough also to receive a visit from Lord Wellesley, to whom his spirits appeared as high as he had ever seen them, and his understanding as vigorous and clear. But before the interview concluded he fainted away, and Lord Wellesley left him with the sad conviction that his end was at hand. His doctors, however, do not seem to have been so apprehensive, and thought he even might be able to attend to business in about a month. No considerable alteration took place in his condition from Thursday, the 16th, to Sunday, the 19th; but on the Sunday an access of typhus fever considerably alarmed his physicians. On Tuesday, the 21st, the danger was evident; and, on the following morning, his old tutor and friend, the Bishop of Lincoln, informed him of his condition. He received the intelligence with firmness, and proceeded to dictate to the Bishop his last wishes. The tide of life then ebbed rapidly away. At times he expressed his thoughts aloud, and though often incoherently, it was evident that the mind was still occupied by its master-passion, and that its last feeble efforts were given to public affairs. He frequently inquired the direction of the wind, and, answering

himself, would say: "East; ah! that will do; that will bring him quick," referring, it was supposed, to Lord Harrowby. Occasionally he cried out "Hear, hear!" as of old days in the House of Commons. From his moaning it appeared that he suffered much; until about half-past two on Thursday morning he fell into a profound silence. After awhile, in a clear voice, but with a tone of poignant anguish, he exclaimed: "Oh, my country! how I leave my country!"* These were his last words, and words not unworthy of Chatham's son. About half-past four he expired, without a groan or struggle, life waning softly and silently, as the candle burns down in its socket.†

He died, we think, at a happy time for his own fame. It is impossible not to see that his Administration was confronted by difficulties which even his courage and fertility of resource could not have overcome. His Cabinet was too weak to have held its own against the attacks of Fox and the Grenvilles; and it is evident that his popularity with the country had been greatly

* Lord Stanhope, 'Life of Pitt,' iv. 382. Lord Malmesbury was told by Sir Walter Farquhar, Pitt's physician, that his last words were: "Oh, what times! oh, my country!"—*Diary*, iv. 346.

† Fox was much affected by his great rival's death. Francis Horner in his journal records, under the date of January 22nd, that "a few hours before going down to Westminster there was a meeting at Mr. Fox's house of a few of the principal persons of Opposition; [Lord] Cowper was there. Fox stated to them that he thought it impossible they could enter into the discussion; he would not while they had the idea that Pitt was in extremities—'*mentem mortalia tangunt*,' he said. Cowper described him as appearing to feel very sensibly the calamity of his distinguished rival." —'Memoirs of Francis Horner.'

impaired. The disastrous failure of his military combinations, and the ever-increasing burden of taxation, would have more and more heavily weighted the scale against him. Reinforcements for his feeble Government he could nowhere have collected. Sidmouth was gravely offended;* Fox was ostracised by royal prejudice; and the Grenvilles had made common cause with Fox. Beneath the pressure of so much discouragement, Pitt, indomitable as he was, must speedily have yielded. And, in fact, his star had been gradually sinking since the date of his resignation. His sacrifice of his principles to the obstinacy of the King; his failure to include men of mark and character in his second Administration; his humiliating surrender to Addington, followed, as it was, by Addington's quick desertion; his inability to save Lord Melville from censure and impeachment; the collapse of his continental policy on the field of Austerlitz; such are the successive stages of a declension almost unexampled in the history of a great statesman. We are persuaded

* Contemptible as were Lord Sidmouth's abilities, we must not underrate his influence. Dean Milman, in a letter to Sir George Lewis, points out that the country gentlemen, then of great political importance, were with him almost to a man. They disliked Pitt's haughtiness; they hated Canning, who openly laughed at them; Fox they dreaded as a Jacobin—and worse. "The mediocrity of Addington suited their mediocrity. In the towns the "No Popery" cry was dominant, had never sunk to rest, and Addington and his friends were the champions of Protestantism. The volunteer system, of which he was very proud, had spread with great excitement throughout the country, was violently popular with all orders, and no doubt some part of its popularity was reflected back on the advisers and organisers of the plan."

that had he lived his fame would have been obscured by more disastrous failures and more signal defeats.

A motion to honour the departed statesman with a public funeral, and a resting-place in Westminster Abbey, was carried in the House of Commons by a large majority. It afforded Wilberforce an opportunity of bearing testimony to Pitt's patriotism and integrity. He bears the same testimony in his private correspondence. "Pitt," he said, "had foibles, and of course they were not diminished by so long a continuance in office; but for a clear and comprehensive view of the most complicated subject in all its relations; for that firmness of mind which disposes a man to follow out, and when overtaken, to recognise the truth; for magnanimity, which made him ready to change his measures when he thought the good of the country required it, though he knew he should be charged with inconsistency on account of the change; for willingness to give a fair hearing to all that could be urged against his own opinions, and to listen to the suggestions of men whose understandings he knew to be inferior to his own; for personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country, I have never known his equal."

At the funeral, on the 22nd of February, Wilberforce was one of those who bore the banner in front of the coffin. The ceremony was very impressive. It seemed to the onlookers as if the adjoining statue of the great Chatham looked down "with consternation into the grave which was opened for his favourite son, the last perpetuator of the name which he had ennobled." The spot where he lies, near the northern door of the Abbey,

is assuredly "hallowed ground;" for within its narrow limits sleeps the dust of the two Pitts, of Mansfield, of Fox and Grattan, of Canning, and Wilberforce himself.*

In conclusion, we may refer briefly to two or three particulars of Pitt's private life, for which in the preceding sketch no room could be found. Though he was never married, he was by no means insensible to the charms of female society. Wraxall speaks of his attachment to one of the beautiful Lennoxes, daughters of the Duke of Richmond; Lord Holland connects his name with Miss Duncan, afterwards Lady Dalrymple Hamilton; and Lady Hester Stanhope said there was a young lady whom he so greatly admired that he drank out of her shoe—not an unusual compliment in the time of Pitt. But his affections were chiefly engaged by Lady Eleanor Eden (afterwards Lady Buckinghamshire). It cost him a deep pang to give her up, which he did, it is said, from a feeling that all his time and attention ought to be surrendered to public affairs. It is recorded of him that he was a severe and accurate critic in all matters of female dress. He was partial, in his hours of leisure, to round games with young people, and would play at the simple pastime of "speculation" with the zest of a child. His conversation was often playful,† and always good-humoured

* "In no other cemetery do so many great citizens lie within so narrow a place."—*Macaulay.*

† The Hon. Edmund Phipps preserves an example of Pitt's "playful humour," related to him by Mr. Croker, who heard it from Mr. Ward himself. "Pitt had come to dine with Mr. Ward in his retreat at West Moulsey. Summer was closing fast, and damp and cold had robbed gloomy firs, a shady lawn, and small rooms level with the ground, of their chief

and brilliant;* and his occasional remarks on men and manners sprang from a clear and exact judgment. Had he been less wholly absorbed in politics, his mind would have been healthier and his views broader; but it is sufficiently evident, from the testimony of many authorities, that he was by no means neglectful of the sweet humanities of life, and that his nature was as kindly as his intellect was robust. If these details should seem to depose him from the frigid and solitary pedestal on which the adulation of indiscriminating partisans has raised him, they bring him at all events much nearer to ordinary sympathies; and we doubt whether he will be less admired because the qualities of his heart are found not to be inferior to his rare mental endowments.†

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attractions. 'What could persuade you,' inquired Mr. Pitt, as he looked around him, "what could persuade you, Ward, to come to such a dismal place?' 'That which is the grand motive to a poor man,—money,' replied Ward. 'Indeed! and pray how much do they give you?' inquired Pitt."—HON. E. PHIPPS, 'Memoirs of R. Plumer Ward,' i. 135.

* Lord Guildford, having met him at the Duke of Rutland's country seat, wrote word that he was sorry to find that "so bad a politician was so very pleasant a man."—HOLLAND, 'Memoirs of the Whig Party,' ii. 34.

† Pitt said to Lord Malmesbury, "I make no scruple in owning that I am ambitious; but my ambition is character, not office."—MALMESBURY, 'Diaries and Correspondence,' iv. 78.

NOTE.

[The following character of Pitt, by the poet Coleridge, appeared in *The Morning Post* of March 19th, 1800:—]

Plutarch, in his comparative biography of Rome and Greece, has generally chosen for each pair of lives the two contemporaries who most nearly resembled each other. His work would, perhaps, have been more interesting if he had adopted the contrary arrangement, and selected those rather who had attained to the possession of similar influence, or similar fame, by means, actions and talents the most dissimilar. For power is the sole object of philosophical attention in man, as in inanimate nature; and in the one, equally as in the other, we understand it more intimately, the more diverse the circumstances are with which we have observed it coexist. In our days, the two persons who appear to have influenced the interests and actions of men the most deeply and the most diffusively, are beyond doubt the Chief Consul of France and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and in these two are presented to us similar situations, with the greatest dissimilitude of characters.

William Pitt was the younger son of Lord Chatham; a fact of no ordinary importance in the solution of his character, of no mean significance in the heraldry of morals and intellect. His father's rank, fame, political connections, and parental ambition were his mould:—he was cast, rather than grew. A palpable election, a conscious predestination controlled the free agency, and transfigured the individuality of his mind; and that which he *might have been* was compelled into that which he *was to be*. From his early childhood it was his father's custom to make him stand up on a chair and declaim before a large company; by which exercise, practised so frequently, and continued for so many years, he acquired a premature and unnatural dexterity in the combination of words which must of necessity have diverted his attention from present objects, obscured his impressions, and deadened his genuine feelings. Not the *thing* on which he was speaking, but the praises to be gained by the speech, were present to his intuition; hence he associated all the operations of his faculties with words, and his pleasures with the surprise excited by them. But an inconceivably large portion of human knowledge and human power is involved in the science and management of words; and an education of words, though it destroys genius, will often create, and always foster talent. The young Pitt was conspicuous far beyond his fellows, both at school and at college. He was always full-grown: he had neither the promise nor the awkwardness of a growing intellect. Vanity, early

satiated, formed and elevated itself into a love of power; and in losing this colloquial vanity, he lost one of the prime links that connect the individual with the species, too early for the affections, though not too early for the understanding. At College he was a severe student, his mind was founded and elemented in words and generalities, and these two formed all the superstructure. That revelry and that debauchery which are so often fatal to the powers of intellect, would probably have been serviceable to him; they would have given him a closer communion with realities, they would have induced a greater presentness to present objects. But Mr. Pitt's conduct was correct, unimpressibly correct. His after-discipline, in the special pleader's office, and at the bar, carried on the scheme of his education with unbroken uniformity. His first political connections were with the Reformers; but those who accuse him of sympathising or coalescing with their intemperance, or visionary plans, misunderstand his character, and are ignorant of the historical facts. Imaginary situations in an imaginary state of things rise up in minds that possess a power, and facility in combining images. Mr. Pitt's ambition was conversant with old situations in the old state of things, which furnish nothing to the imagination, though much to the wishes. In his endeavours to realise his father's plan of reform, he was probably as sincere as a being, who had derived so little knowledge from actual impressions, could be. But his sincerity had no real root of affection; while it was propped up by his love of praise and immediate power, so long it stood erect and no longer. He became a member of the Parliament—supported the popular opinions, and in a few years, by the influence of the popular party, was placed in that high and awful rank in which he now is. The fortunes of his country, we had almost said the fates of the world, were placed in his wardship—we sink in prostration before the inscrutable dispensations of Providence, when we reflect in whose wardship the fates of the world were placed!

The influencer of his country and species was a young man, the creature of another's predetermination, sheltered and weather-fended from all the elements of experience; a young man whose feet had never wandered, whose very eye had never turned to the right or to the left, whose whole track had been as curveless as the motion of a fascinated reptile! It was a young man whose heart was solitary, because he had existed always among objects of futurity, and whose imagination too was unpopulous, because those objects of hope, to which his habitual wishes had transferred, and as it were projected, his existence, were all familiar and long established objects!—A plant sown and reared in a hot-house, for whom the very air that surrounded him had been regulated by the thermometer

of previous purpose; to whom the light of nature had penetrated only through glasses and covers; who had had the sun without the breeze; whom no storm had shaken, on whom no rain had pattered; on whom the dews of Heaven had not fallen!—A being, who had had no feelings connected with man or nature, no spontaneous impulses, no unbiassed and desultory studies, no genuine science, nothing that constitutes individuality in intellect, nothing that teaches brotherhood in affection! Such was the man—such, and so denaturalised the spirit, on whose wisdom and philanthropy the lives and living enjoyments of so many millions of human beings were made unavoidably dependent. From this time a real enlargement of mind became almost impossible. Pre-occupations, intrigue, the undue passion and anxiety with which all facts must be surveyed; the crowd and confusion of those facts, none of them seen, but all communicated, and by that very circumstance, and by the necessity of perpetually classifying them, transmuted into words and generalities; pride, flattery, irritation, artifical power; these and circumstances resembling these, necessarily render the heights of office barren heights, which command indeed a vast and extensive prospect, but attract so many clouds and vapours, that most often all prospect is precluded. Still, however, Mr. Pitt's situation, however inauspicious for his real being, was favourable to his fame. He heaped period on period; persuaded himself and the nation, that extemporaneous arrangement of sentences was eloquence; and that eloquence implied wisdom. His father's struggles for freedom, and his own attempts, gave him almost unexampled popularity; and his office necessarily associated his name with all the great events that happened during his Administration. There were not, however, wanting men who saw through this delusion: and refusing to attribute the industry, integrity and enterprising spirit of our merchants, the agricultural improvements of our landholders, the great inventions of our manufacturers, or the valour and skilfulness of our sailors to the merits of a minister, they have continued to decide on his character from those acts and those merits which belong to him and to him alone. Judging him from this standard, they have been able to discover in him no one proof or symptom of a commanding genius. They have discovered him never controlling, never creating events, but always yielding to them with rapid change, and sheltering himself from inconsistency by perpetual indefiniteness. In the Russian War they saw him abandoning meanly what he had planned weakly and threatened insolently. In the debates on the Regency they detected the laxity of his constitutional principles, and received proofs that his eloquence consisted not in the ready application of a general system to particular questions, but in the facility of arguing for or against any question by

specious generalities, without reference to any system. In these debates, he combined what is most dangerous in democracy, with all that is most degrading in the old superstitions of Monarchy, and taught an inherency of the office in the person, in order to make the office a nullity, and the Premiership, with its accompanying majority, the sole and permanent power of the State. And now came the French Revolution. This was a new event; the old routine of reasoning, the common trade of politics were to become obsolete. He appeared wholly unprepared for it. Half favouring, half condemning, ignorant of what he favoured and why he condemned, he neither displayed the honest enthusiasm and fixed principle of Mr. Fox, nor the intimate acquaintance with the general nature of man, and the consequent *prescience* of Mr. Burke. After the declaration of war, long did he continue, in the common cant of office, in declamation about the Scheldt, and Holland, and all the vulgar causes of common contests! and when at last the immense genius of his new supporters had beat him out of these *words* (words signifying *places* and *dead objects*, and signifying nothing more) he adopted other words in their places, other generalities—Atheism and Jacobinism—phrases which he learnt from Mr. Burke, but without learning the philosophical definitions and involved consequences with which that great man accompanied those words. Since the death of Mr. Burke, the forms and the sentiments, and the tone of the French have undergone many and important changes; how, indeed, is it possible that it should be otherwise, while man is the creature of experience? But still Mr. Pitt proceeds in an endless repetition of the same *general phrases*. This is his element: deprive him of general and abstract phrases, and you reduce him to silence. But you cannot deprive him of them. Press him to specify an *individual* fact of advantage to be derived from a war—and he answers, Security. Call upon him to particularize a crime—and he exclaims, Jacobinism. Abstractions defined by abstractions! Generalities defined by generalities! As a Minister of Finance, he is still, as ever, the man of words, and abstractions! Figures, custom-house reports, imports and exports, commerce and revenue—all flourishing, all splendid! Never was such a prosperous country as England, under his administration! Let it be objected that the agriculture of the country is, by the overbalance of commerce, and by various and complex causes, in such a state that the country hangs as a pensioner for bread on its neighbours, and a bad season uniformly threatens us with famine—this (it is replied) is owing to our Prosperity—all *prosperous* nations are in great distress for food — Still Prosperity, still General Phrases, unenforced by one *single image*, one *single fact* of real national amelioration, of any one comfort enjoyed, where it was not before enjoyed, of any one class of society becoming

healthier, or wiser, or happier. These are *things*, these are realities; and these Mr. Pitt has neither the imagination to body forth, nor the sensibility to feel for. Once indeed, in an evil hour, intriguing for popularity, he suffered himself to be persuaded to evince a talent for the Real, the Individual: and he brought in his Poor Bill! When we hear the Minister's talents for finance so loudly trumpeted, we turn involuntarily to his Poor Bill—to that acknowledged abortion—that unanswerable evidence of his ignorance respecting all the fundamental relations and actions of property and of the social union!

As his reasonings, even so is his eloquence. One character pervades his whole being. Words on words, finely arranged, and so dexterously consequent, that the whole bears the semblance of argument, and still keeps awake a sense of surprise—but when all is done, nothing rememberable has been said; no one philosophical remark, not one image, not even a pointed aphorism. Not a sentence of Mr. Pitt's has ever been quoted or formed the favourite phrase of the day—a thing unexampled in any man of equal reputation. But while he speaks, the effect varies according to the character of his auditor. The man of no talent is swallowed up in surprise; and when the speech is ended, he remembers his feelings, but nothing distinct of that which produced them—(how opposite an effect to that of nature and genius, from whose works the idea still remains when the feeling is passed away—remains to connect itself with other feelings, and combine with new impressions)! The mere man of talent hears him with admiration—the mere man of genius with contempt—the philosopher neither admires nor contemns, but listens to him with a deep and solemn interest, tracing in the effects of his eloquence the power of words and phrases, and that peculiar constitution of human affairs in their present state, which so eminently favours this power.

Such appears to us to be the Prime Minister of Great Britain, whether we consider him as a statesman or as an orator. The same character betrays itself in his private life—the same coldness to realities, to images of realities, and to all whose excellence relates to reality. He has patronized no science, he has raised no man of genius from obscurity, he counts no one prime work of God among his friends. From the same source he has no attachment to female society, no fondness for children, no perception of beauty in natural scenery; but he is fond of convivial indulgences, of that stimulation which, keeping up the glow of self-importance and the sense of internal power, gives feelings without the mediation of ideas.

These are the elements of his mind: the accidents of his fortune, the circumstances that enabled such a mind to acquire and retain such a power, would form the subject of a philosophical history, and that too of

no scanty size. We can scarcely furnish the chapter of contents to a work which would comprise subjects so important and delicate, as the causes of the diffusion and intensity of secret influence; the machinery and state intrigue of marriages; the overbalance of the commercial interest; the panic of property struck by the late Revolution; the shortsightedness of the careful; the carelessness of the far-sighted, and all those many and various events which have given to a decorous profession of religion and a seemliness of private morals such an unwonted weight in the attainment and preservation of public power. We are unable to determine whether it be more consolatory or humiliating to human nature, that so many complexities of event, situation, character, age and country, should be necessary in order to the production of a Mr. Pitt.

BOOK II.

GEORGE CANNING.

A.D. 1770–1827.

[AUTHORITIES:—A good biography of Canning, with a complete and authentic collection of his *jeux d'esprit* and political satires, would seem to be still wanting. We have consulted the *Life and Speeches,* by Therry, published in 1828; the *Political Life,* by Mr. Augustus Stapleton, 1831; and the succinct *Life of George Canning,* by Robert Bell, 1846. We have also made use of *The Spirit of the Public Journals* (v. *y.*); *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin,* edit. by Edmonds, 1854; Lord Brougham, *Statesmen of the Reign of George the 3rd;* Adolphus, *History of the Reign of George the 3rd;* Miss Martineau, *History of the Thirty Years' Peace;* Sir G. Cornewall Lewis, *Essays on the Administrations of Great Britain; Life of William Wilberforce,* by his Sons; *Memoirs of Francis Horner,* edit. by Leonard Horner; *Correspondence and Despatches of the 2nd Marquis of Londonderry; Diaries and Memoirs of Lord Malmesbury, Sir Samuel Romilly,* and *Sir James Mackintosh; Diaries of a Lady of Quality,* edited by Hayward; Lord Holland, *Memoirs of the Whig Party;* Duke of Buckingham, *Memoirs of the Court of George the 4th; Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,* edit. by Earl Stanhope and Lord Cardwell; *The Annual Register;* Lord Dalling, *Historical Characters; The Greville Memoirs,* edit. by Henry Reeve.]

BOOK II.

GEORGE CANNING.

A.D. 1770-1827.

I.

THE political history of Great Britain presents no more romantic or exciting chapter than that which records the career of George Canning. None of our leading statesmen have belonged so entirely to the middle class, and not even to an upper stratum of that class; none have so entirely made a profession of politics. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield may also occur to our readers as having sprung from or as belonging to the middle class. But the former entered Parliament with the support of opulent connections; and the latter traces his descent from one of the most distinguished of Hebrew families. Canning was of reputable birth; and that is all. His father was a bankrupt wine-merchant; his mother, the portionless daughter of an Irish trader, was at one time compelled to earn her livelihood on the stage. His start in life was due to an uncle's liberality. In a country where rank and wealth carry more than their legitimate influence, Canning's social position was such as almost to preclude any hope of his attaining a foremost place. And that he should have risen to the premiership of

England, that he should have become the acknowledged leader of the House of Commons, that he should have planted his foot firmly on the threshold of the Upper Chamber, are circumstances sufficiently remarkable to awaken our interest and provoke our astonishment. Undoubtedly they are proofs of the possession of no common powers of mind and no ordinary force of character. At the outset of his career a calm observer would have been disposed to predict its certain failure. Everything was against him; except that he had already made some powerful friends. He was heavily weighted for the race he had set himself to run. No feature of his character, therefore, strikes us more than his persistency; that fixity of purpose which no obstacles could turn aside, and no discouragements weaken. By his political opponents he was frequently called "an adventurer;" and in his celebrated speech at Liverpool he accepted the designation, though not with the meaning attached to it by his enemies. He was an adventurer, he said, in being one of the people; in presenting himself before the public only with the claims of character, unaccredited by patrician patronage or party recommendation. "If," he said, "to depend directly upon the people, as their representative in Parliament; if, as a servant of the Crown, to lean on no other support than that of public confidence,—if that be to be an adventurer, I plead guilty to the charge, and I would not exchange that situation, to whatever taunts it may expose me, for all the advantages which might be derived from an ancestry of an hundred generations." But in another sense, and a sense nearer to that implied

by the voice of faction, he was an adventurer. From the beginning of his career he aspired, not to place but to power. He resolved that his intellectual endowments should yield him a splendid return. Like a politician of our own day, who in not a few points resembles him, he was determined that the world should hear him; and that his should be the highest position in the empire to which a subject could attain. It was no ignoble ambition, for he was fully conscious of the responsibilities which such a position involves, and his keen vision saw the capabilities of boundless well-doing which such a position confers. To some it would have seemed a hopeless ambition, when all the chances against them, all the bars of circumstance and accident, were calmly weighed. But every strong mind is aware of its strength, and Canning knew that he *had* the strength, as well as the patience and the energy which deal with the most formidable obstacles as the waves deal with straws.

Canning attracts attention, moreover, as the first literary politician who in England has "climbed to the top of the tree." Bolingbroke was a man of letters, but not so thoroughly literary as Canning; and Burke never held high office. Canning, steeped in literature to his lips, literary in his tastes, in his judgments, in his style, occupied an unique position, until a successor appeared in the author of 'Vivian Grey.' No man, not even Tom Moore or Theodore Hook, could throw off a pasquinade or a parody with greater ease and grace. He abounded in apposite illustration and felicitous quotation. He wrote prose and poetry with equal point and equal charm. His literary faculty was seen in his

fastidious revision of his speeches, which he polished with as much of the "labor limæ" as Horace bestowed on his cameo-like lyrics. His despatches are as carefully finished as his speeches; and it is characteristic of his good taste, as well as of his independence of conventionalities, that he was the first Minister who conducted his diplomatic correspondence in English. Like every refined mind, he was a passionate admirer of the Greek and Latin classics. Some of his best efforts are his humourous adaptations of the Odes of Horace. Few of his speeches but derive an additional grace from a felicitous Latin quotation. Wilberforce draws a pleasant picture of him and Pitt, amusing themselves in a corner of the latter's drawing-room, with some favourite Greek author, while the rest of the company were engaged in conversation. He read anything and everything, but had a special and honourable weakness for novels and poetry. Among the English poets his favourite seems to have been Dryden, whose vigorous verse he pronounced the perfection of harmony, and whom he recommended to Scott as a model, while fully appreciating all that was good and picturesque in "the Lady of the Lake" and her companions.

His literary tastes, as we have said, were carried into his oratory; that is, unlike Chatham's, and Pitt's, and Fox's, and even in a more marked degree than that of Burke's, it was the oratory of a man of letters. It sparkled with antithesis, with epigram, with allusion. Whole passages sounded like jests from Rabelais, except that they were more delicate; and these were elaborated with the skill of a practised hand. The fine Attic flavour and

perfume of his style led Mackintosh to say of him that he had incorporated in his mind all the eloquence and wisdom of ancient literature. His powers of description were not inferior to his command of wit and ridicule, and he often rose to a height of eloquence not surpassed by Burke himself. Imagination, fancy, wit, humour,—what more can we ask in a great orator? Well, all these rich and rare qualities would count for little in the British senate if they were unaccompanied by less pretentious but more useful merits. These too, Canning possessed in an eminent degree. While Beaconsfield does not excel him in epigrammatic turn of phrase, nor Gladstone in lucidity of exposition, neither can be said to approach him in the power of close and yet rapid argumentation, and the capacity (to use an expression of Lord Brougham's) for the pursuits of abstract science. Wilberforce objects that "he never drew you to him in spite of yourself" as Pitt and Fox did—that the art was too apparent. This is certainly not true of all his speeches.*

* "Quick, easy, and fluent, frequently passionate and sarcastic, now brilliant and ornamental, then again light and playful; or, if he wished it, clear, simple, and incisive; no speaker ever combined a greater variety of qualities, though many have been superior in each of the excellences which he possessed. More usually remarkable for the polish of his language (we have proof, even to the last, of the pains he bestowed upon it), those who knew him well assert that he would sometimes purposely frame his sentences loosely and incorrectly, in order to avoid the appearance of preparation. His action, exhibiting when calm a union of grace and dignity, became, as he warmed, unaffectedly fervent; and made natural by its vigour and animation the florid language and figurative decorations in which he rather too fondly indulged. His arguments were not placed in that clear, logical form, which sometimes enchains, but more often wearies, attention; neither did he use those solemn perorations by

Some of them, both in and out of Parliament, produced an impression as deep and strong as orator could desire, and can hardly be read at this day, and in cold blood, without emotion. But in certain cases the criticism applies; and the failure is due to the literary faculty we have noted, which urged him into a process of over-elaboration. We shall have occasion to remark upon several of Canning's speeches in the course of the following narrative; but we may be allowed to introduce in this place, as the most convenient, a specimen of his humour and of his higher eloquence. Lord Nugent, a respectable English gentleman, as rotund of person as the traditional John Bull, had volunteered his assistance to the Constitutional party in Spain. The following fine piece of genial raillery immortalizes him in Canning's best manner:—

"It was about the middle of last July that the heavy Falmouth coach (Lord Nugent was M.P. for Falmouth) was observed travelling to its destination, through the roads of Cornwall, with more than its usual gravity. There were, according to the best advices, two inside passengers—one, a lady of no considerable dimensions, and a gentleman, who, as it has been since ascertained, was conveying the succour of his person to Spain. I am informed, and, having no reason to doubt my infor-

which it is attempted to instil awe or terror into the mind. His was rather the endeavour to charm the ear, to amuse the fancy, to excite the feelings, to lead and fascinate the judgment; and in those different attributes of his great science he succeeded in the highest degree, insomuch that though he might be said to want depth and sublimity, the faculties he possessed were elevated to such a pitch, that at times he appeared both profound and sublime."—Lord Dalling, 'Historical Characters,' p. 428.

mant, firmly believe it, that in the van belonging to the coach—(gentlemen must know the nature and uses of that auxiliary to regular stage-coaches)—was a box, more bulky than ordinary, and of most portentous contents. It was observed that, after their arrival, this box and the passenger before-mentioned became inseparable. The box was known to have contained the uniform of a Spanish General of cavalry; and it was said of the helmet, which was beyond the usual size, that it exceeded all other helmets spoken of in history, not excepting the celebrated helmet in 'The Castle of Otranto.' The idea of going to a fortress blockaded by sea, and besieged by land, with the uniform of a light cavalry officer, was new, to say the least of it. About this time, the force offered by the honourable gentleman, which had never existed but on paper, was in all probability expected—I will not stay to determine whether it was to have consisted of 10,000 or 5,000 men. No doubt, upon the arrival of the General and his uniform, the Cortes must have rubbed their hands with satisfaction, and concluded that, now the promised force was come, they would have little more to fear. It did come, as much of it as ever would have been seen by the Cortes or the King; but it came in that sense and no other which was described by a witty nobleman, George, Duke of Buckingham, whom the Noble Lord reckons among his lineal ancestors. In the play of 'The Rehearsal,' there was a scene occupied with the designs of two usurpers, to whom one of their party, entering, says:—

> 'Sirs,
> The army at the door, but in disguise,
> Entreats a word of both your Majesties.'

Such must have been the effect of the arrival of the Noble Lord. How he was received, or what effect he operated on the councils and affairs of the Cortes by his arrival, I do not know. Things were at that juncture moving too rapidly to their final issue. How far the Noble Lord conduced to the termination by plunging his weight into the sinking scale of the Cortes, is too nice a question for me just now to settle."

Now for an example of his loftier mood. We take it from the celebrated speech which he delivered at Plymouth in 1823:—

"Our present repose is no more a proof of inability to act, than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town, is a proof they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted out for action. You will know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses, now reposing in their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated being, instinct with life and motion—how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage *—how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awaken its dormant thunder! Such is one of those magnificent machines, when, springing from inaction into a display of its might. Such is England herself: while apparently

* How happily these words convey to the mind the idea of the resemblance of a ship to a swan!—an idea which Schiller has embodied in one of his Enigmas.

passive and motionless, she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion."

A careful perusal of Canning's speeches will dispose the reader, we believe, to find little fault with the conclusion of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, "that as an orator he has never been surpassed, if he has ever been equalled, among the statesmen of this country." Scarcely less comprehensive is the eulogium pronounced upon him by Brougham.* Yet he did not always carry the House with him, and his weight in debate was not always in proportion to his oratorical powers. The reason is not far to seek. The matter-of-fact English intellect is always suspicious of the man who calls raillery and jest and epigram to the assistance of his argument; and it mistrusts the solidity of the latter on account of the brilliancy of the former. The

* It is painful to find such a man as Sydney Smith so blinded by political prejudice and jealousy as to write of Canning in the following terms:— "When he is jocular, he is strong; when he is serious, he is like Samson in a wig; any ordinary person is a match for him. A song, an ironical letter, a burlesque ode, an attack in the newspapers upon Nicholl's eyes, a smart speech of twenty minutes, full of gross misrepresentations and clever terms, excellent language, a spirited manner, lucky quotation, success in provoking dull men, some half-information picked up in Pall Mall in the morning,—these are your friend's natural weapons; all these things he can do; here I allow him to be truly great. Nay, I will be just, and go still farther: if he would confine himself to these things, and consider the facile and playful to be the basis of his character, he would, for that species of man, be universally allowed to be a person of a very good understanding; call him a legislator, a reasoner, and the conductor of the affairs of a great nation, and it seems to me as absurd as if a butterfly were to teach bees to make honey. That he is an extraordinary writer of small poetry, and a diner-out of the highest order, I do most readily admit." As it happens, Canning was not a diner-out; but Sydney Smith was.

country gentlemen could not believe that this consummate wit was based upon the most solid sense; could not understand that logical reasoning was not incompatible with arrowy keenness of satire. Again: Canning was one of the most reckless of politicians. Lord Beaconsfield has always kept his epigrammatic powers well under control; has never, or seldom, let them loose when or where they could injure himself or his party. But Canning flung his wit at everybody, as a child throws a handful of fireworks among a crowd, and cared not to remember that some of those whom he assailed might hereafter be useful as friends or formidable as foes. Pitt, whose favourite disciple he was, suspected him of several attacks upon himself during the dull reign of the Addington Cabinet of mediocrities. That he should have risen to power, in spite of the vindictive feelings he so carelessly provoked, is a significant testimony to the real force and weight of his character, as well as to the conspicuous importance which, in a parliamentary Government, attaches to rhetorical ability.*

* In Mr. Plumer Ward's novel of 'De Vere,' Canning is elaborately portrayed under the name of Wentworth. "It is not easy," says the novelist, "to describe this amiable and accomplished person. His mind was an assemblage of all that could excite, and all that could soothe; his heart, the seat of an ambition, belonging, as it were, to himself; equally above stooping to court a people, and which in fear of either could affright. With all this his feelings were attuned to friendship, and his intellect to the pleasures of elegant cultivation. Thus he shone alike in the tumult of party, and the witchery of letters. In these last, he had been beautifully distinguished, and had had many amiable associates, before he acquired his political eminence.

"In the senate, his eloquence rose like a mountain river, taking its rise from reason, but swelling its impetus by a thousand auxiliary streams of

George Canning can hardly be called a great statesman. His domestic policy was never very clearly defined. It depended too much on the chances and changes of the hour, and showed an ignorance or a want of fundamental principles. His conduct was always influenced by a double current of feeling; reactionary at home, he was liberal abroad. Allowance must be made for the fact that he was brought up in the school of Pitt in Pitt's later period, when that Minister had discarded the progressive

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wit and imagination, which it gathered on the way. It is, indeed, difficult to say whether his wit or his reason predominated; for such was the effect of both united, that never was reason so set off by wit, or wit so sustained by reason. The one was a running fire, flashing from right to left over the whole field of argument, so as to embarrass and paralyze his antagonists; while the other, when seriousness was resumed, struck down everything that opposed, with the force of thunder (*a*).

"But he had a more powerful recommendation still to the favour of his auditors, whether in the senate or elsewhere. His politics, as his heart, were truly, I might say insularly, British; and though he contemplated and understood the Continent as well as any, and better than most who went before him, of the Continent it was his principle to steer clear, except in so far as it was connected with Britain. This did not fail to 'buy him golden opinions with all sorts of persons'; and he wound up all by a staunch adherence to his personal friends, not one of whom he had ever been known to fail, or to abandon. This made him the most loved for his own sake, of all the leaders of his time *out* of the House, while in it he reigned without struggle or compeer,—*nihil simile aut secundum.*"

(*a*) Moore, who heard Canning speak on Lord John Russell's Reform Motion, April 25th, 1822, says:—"He far surpassed every thing I had expected from him. It was all that can be imagined *agreeable* in oratory; nothing, certainly, profound or generalising; or grand or electric; but for good taste, for beauty of language, for grace, playfulness, and all that regards manner and display, it was perfect."—'Memoirs of Thomas Moore,' ed. by Earl Russell, iii. 346.

tendencies of his earlier career. And it may also be conceded that, towards the close of his life, he gave indications of the adoption of broader views and more generous sympathies. But for the most part he figured as an opponent of reform, whether civil or religious. We do not think his heart was in this work. It was forced upon him, we suspect, by the exigencies of his position. Perhaps we may fairly speak of him, in his later days, as a Liberal wearing Tory colours; as a general who armed his troops to defend fortresses which he wished to see captured. On the other hand, the effect of culture, at least of a special kind of literary culture, is undoubtedly conservative. The imagination, touched by the picturesque associations that invest ancient institutions, so acts upon the judgment that it has neither the will nor the power to rightly estimate their defects. The tower may be a ruin; but who would demolish it when, with its garniture of wild flowers and ivy leaf, it forms so romantic an object? Much must be forgiven, however, to the Minister who so boldly assailed and broke down the power of the Holy Alliance *;

* "Mr. Canning had been, from his first introduction into Parliament, a follower of Pitt, and had no political connection with the Whigs. He was a determined opponent of Parliamentary Reform, and had defended the existing constitution of the House of Commons in some of his most elaborate and effective speeches. But he was a man of far more knowledge and capacity than Lord Castlereagh; of a more elastic understanding and of a more independent judgment. He could appreciate more quickly and truly the changes in the circumstances of the times, and adapt himself to them with greater readiness. His views of foreign politics were more national, and less identified with those of the great despotic Courts—with that system which, in the phraseology of the day, was called the Holy Alliance. His political connection, moreover, lay among persons of more liberal views in commercial and financial affairs."—Sir G. Cornewall Lewis, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' p. 428.

to the Minister who recognised the duty of England to promote the diffusion of free institutions; to the Minister who delivered Portugal from the disgrace of a Bourbon invasion; to the Minister who assisted the American colonies of Spain in asserting their independence; to the Minister who emancipated the Hellenic people. Rightly has it been said that no English statesman of modern times has left on the Continent of Europe a name so closely identified with a great and generous policy. No English statesman has so clearly perceived that the true interests of Great Britain are indissolubly intervoven with the interest of freedom, truth, and justice. And our foreign policy can never be worthy of a free and powerful people except when it works on the lines laid down by Canning, and aims at the objects which to Canning were so dear.*

George Canning was born in London on the 11th of April, 1770. His father, a man of some literary ability, had led a chequered and romantic life; had been a barrister, a poet, a pamphleteer, and a wine merchant, and in each capacity had failed. His mother, Miss Costello, had married this clever, careless, unfortunate "ne'er-do-well" in 1768. She came of a respectable Irish family, and possessed considerable personal attrac-

* Lord Dalling, no incompetent critic, describes Canning's foreign policy as "a policy for giving England a great and proud position,—for giving to Englishmen a glorious and respected name; for safeguarding our shores by the universal prestige of our bravery and our power; for limiting the ambition of rival states, without needlessly provoking their animosity; for showing a wish to conciliate wherever moderation is displayed, and for displaying a resolution to resist when conciliation is repulsed—a great policy, with which the people of England will ever sympathise, and by which the permanent interests of England will best be preserved."

tion. A year after her son's birth she became a widow; and in order to support herself and child adopted the stage as a profession. Her first appearance was made at Drury Lane, on the 6th of November, 1773, in the character of "Jane Shore." But, though a beautiful woman, she proved to be an indifferent actress, and failing to gain the applause of metropolitan audiences, she limited her ambition to the provinces. Unfortunately for herself, she came into contact with a handsome dissipated actor and manager, named Reddish, whom she was induced to marry. His career of profligacy and drunken excess was terminated by brain disease, a few years after their marriage, and he had made her so unhappy by his life that she had no cause to regret his death. Continuing to perform at provincial theatres Mrs. Reddish found her way to Plymouth, where she made the acquaintance of a Mr. Hunn, a respectable silk mercer. He made her an offer of his hand, and it was accepted. But this third marriage proved as unfortunate as her preceding ventures. Mr. Hunn failed in business, and his wife was compelled to return to the boards. He, too, attempted the stage; but with such ill-success that he was glad to retire into a mercantile situation. In this he died, leaving his widow with two daughters and a son.

George Canning, meanwhile, had been rescued from a life of poverty and constant change by the benevolence of an uncle, Mr. Stratford Canning, a banker and an old Whig, who took charge of the boy on condition that he was withdrawn from intercourse with his mother's connections. He settled upon him a small estate, which

yielded about £200 a year, and provided for his education on a munificent scale. It should not be forgotten, however, that, though thus brought into a higher social circle than his mother's, Canning never failed in filial devotion either at this time or in the greater success of his later career. He wrote to his mother every week, and continued this practice when immersed in the cares of public life. Nor were his letters merely formal; he described in them minutely his actions, hopes, fears, interests, prospects, and associates. His visits to her were very frequent, and he entered frankly into all her friendships. One of his chief anxieties was to withdraw her from the stage; and in this he succeeded, when, in 1801, on his retirement from the office of Under Secretary of State, he became entitled to a pension of £500 a-year. Instead of applying it to his own purposes, he requested it might be settled upon his mother. It is to the shame and reproach of the public writers of the time, that they seized on this noble action as an excuse for their sorry jests. That coarsest and most unprincipled of satirists, Peter Pindar (Dr. Wolcot), founded upon it a series of attacks. He wrote on one occasion:—

> "And Canning, too, shall be in place,
> And get a pension for his mother."

On another:—

> "I must have something, Canning cries,
> And fastens on some rich mince-pies,
> As dexterous as the rest to rifle;
> Ecod! and he must something do
> For *mother* and for *sisters* too,
> So steals some syllabub and trifle."

The satirist here blunted his own weapon, for Canning had no sisters. The really anti-democratic character of English society, even in its lower strata, appears in the abuse levelled at Canning by his political adversaries, by "men of the people," such as Hunt and Cobbett, in connection with his mother's professional career and comparative poverty. The democracy are seldom proud of the rise of one of themselves. The English democracy, at all events, is never satisfied with a democratic leader.

The rudiments of education, as it is fashionable to call them, George Canning received at Hyde Abbey School, near Winchester, then under the charge of the Rev. Mr. Richards.* Thence, at the suggestion of Mr. Fox, to whom, as well as to Burke and Grenville and other Whig politicians, he was introduced at his uncle's house, he was removed to Eton, where he rapidly acquired a high reputation for the excellence of his compositions in Latin and English. He was distinguished among his schoolfellows by the generosity of his temper and the elevation of his character; while his masters recognised his power of application, his fine taste, and his quickness of apprehension. No more brilliant pupil had ever shone conspicuous in the classical arena of Eton. He became a foremost member of a society for the practice of discussion, formed on the model of the House of Commons; and engaged in fre-

* Richards was a severe disciplinarian, but a good scholar. He received at the hands of Canning, when in office, a prebendal stall in Winchester Cathedral.

quent intellectual competition with many who, like Earl Grey and the Marquis of Wellesley, afterwards rose, like Canning himself, to the highest places in the senate and the council-chamber. Out of this society of clever lads sprang a literary enterprise of some celebrity. Whether Canning projected it, is not quite certain, but he was without doubt one of the principal contributors to 'The Microcosm: a Periodical Work, by Gregory Griffin, of the College of Eton,' which made its first appearance on the 6th of November, 1786, and was continued weekly until July 30th, 1787. It consisted of papers by Canning, J. and R. Smith, and Hookham Frere, with occasional assistance from Mellish, Lord Henry Spencer, and others. Originally intended, in imitation of Addison's *Spectator*, it soon took a wider range, and embraced a world of jest and parody, quite fresh and original in character. Canning's contributions were very numerous; one, a poem of much merit, on 'The Slavery of Greece,' reveals his liberality of sentiment and vigour of thought; another is a really brilliant imitation of Addison's laboured criticism on the ballad of 'Chevy Chase.'* It professes to furnish a commentary on the merits of the well known nursery-song—

> "The Queen of Hearts
> She made some tarts,
> All on a summer's day,"

* This is the general statement, but is it not quite as much a burlesque of Johnson? Here is a bit of pure Johnsonese:—"The author has not branched his poem with excrescences of episode, or prolixities of digression; it is neither variegated with diversity of unmeaning similitudes, nor glaring with the varnish of unnatural metaphor."

and the following passage will give some idea of its style:—

"'All on a summer's day.' I cannot leave this line without remarking that one of the Scribleri, a descendant of the famous Martinus, has expressed his suspicions of the text being corrupted here, and proposes, instead of 'All on,' reading 'Alone,' alleging, in favour of this alteration, the effect of solitude in raising the passions. But Hiccius Doctius, a High Dutch commentator,—one, nevertheless, well versed in British literature,—in a note of his usual length and learning, has confuted the arguments of Scriblerus. In support of the present reading, he quotes a passage from a poem written about the same time as our author's, by the celebrated Johannes Pastor (most commonly known as Jack Shepherd), entitled 'An Elegiac Epistle to the Turnkey of Newgate,' wherein the gentleman declares that—rather indeed in compliance with an old custom than to gratify any particular wish of his own—he is going

'All hanged for to be
Upon that fatal Tyburn Tree.'

Now, as nothing throws greater light on an author than the concurrence of a contemporary writer, I am inclined to be of Hiccius's opinion, and to consider the "All" an elegant expletive, or, as he more aptly phrases it, '*elegans expletivum.*'"

There is an abundance of cleverness in 'The Microcosm;' the writing is always correct, often elegant, and the humour is neither coarse nor unnatural. Its authors seem to have been well known. In July,

1787, Miss Burney (the author of 'Evelina') attended the Royal Family on a visit to Eton to hear the speeches; and she tells us in her Diary that they "were chiefly in Greek and Latin, but concluded with three or four in English; some were pronounced extremely well, especially those spoken by the *chief composers* of the 'Microcosm,' Canning and Smith." It has had many imitators, but none of them have reached as high a standard of literary excellence,—with the exception, perhaps, of Charles Knight's *Etonian*. The Harrow boys started a rival, embellishing it with a pretentious frontispiece, which showed the two periodicals in a balance, and 'The Microcosm' kicking the beam. Canning revenged himself and his fellow-writers in the following epigram:—

"What mean ye by this print so rare,
Ye wits of Harrow jealous?
Behold! your rivals soar in air,
And ye are *heavy fellows*!"

The Harrovian venture quickly passed into the cold shade of oblivion.

In 1788 Canning, with all the bloom of his Eton reputation upon him, entered Christ Church, Oxford. Here his most intimate companions were Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards Earl of Liverpool) and Lord Henry Spencer, his Eton colleague; but his circle of acquaintance also included Lords Holland, Carlisle, Grenville, Seaford, and Borringdon, and Mr. Sturges Bourne. Inferior to all in social status, he rose above all by right of his wit, his elegant scholarship, and his versatility. His pleasant pen was ever active. In his vacations he was accustomed to

visit the Crewes of Crewe-Hall, and the Leighs of Cheshire, and these families still preserve as valued heir-looms many effusions of his sportive fancy. One of these is so characteristic in style that we may transfer it to our pages, though it has been often quoted. Mrs. Leigh had presented Canning with a pair of shooting breeches, and on the anniversary of her wedding-day, received from him the following stanzas in acknowledgment:—

"While all to this auspicious day,
Well pleased their heartfelt homage pay,
And sweetly smile and softly say
A hundred civil speeches;
My muse shall strike her tuneful strings,
Nor scorn the gift her duty brings,
Tho' humble be the theme she sings,—
A pair of shooting breeches.

"Soon shall the tailor's subtle art,
Have made them tight, and spruce, and smart,
And fastened well in every part,
With twenty thousand stitches;
Mark then the moral of my song,
Oh! may your loves but prove as strong,
And wear as well, and last as long,
As these, my shooting breeches.

"And when to ease the load of life,
Of private care and public strife,
My lot shall give to me a wife,
I ask not rank or riches;
For worth like thine alone I pray,
Temper like thine, serene and gay,
And formed like thee, to *give away*,
Not wear herself, the breeches."

Canning's University career was one of peculiar brilliancy.* His Latin prize poem, 'Iter ad Meccam'

* Bentham relates that Lord Lansdowne pointed out Canning to him as a youth likely to become Prime Minister of England.

(June, 1789) was far above the average of such productions; and its incidental allusion to the Moslem standard,

> "Vexillis fluitantibus intertexta,
> Sanctum insigne micant crescentis cornua lunæ,"—

has been deservedly praised. His orations attracted attention by their choiceness of phrase, compactness of form, and liberality of sentiment. In the examinations he passed competitors with enviable ease, and all that he did was remarkable for its evidence of refinement, facility, and power. It was with predictions from every quarter of a brilliant career that he left Christ Church, and proceeded to enter himself as a student of law at Lincoln's Inn. London was then in the throes of the Revolutionary panic. Burke's highly-coloured vaticinations and the excesses of the Jacobites had startled the soberer classes of English Society, and induced a great Tory reaction. The Whigs remained true to their traditional policy: and the Whigs, when Canning entered public life, enjoyed an almost undisputed monopoly of intellectual resources,—led by Fox, with Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, Erskine, and Curran as his lieutenants,—and supported by the charms of the Duchess of Devonshire, and the wit and beauty of Mrs. Crewe.* But the Tories had the strength of *les gros bataillons* on their

* Wilberforce preserves one of her happy sayings. "So your friend Mr. Pitt means to come in," she said to him in December, 1783; "well, he may do what he likes during the holidays, but it will be only a *mince-pie administration*, depend on it."— *Life*, p. 23. Mr. Crewe was raised to the peerage by Fox in 1806. Lord Houghton has made Lady Crewe the subject of one of his graceful monographs.

side. The Revolution haunted like a spectre the day-thoughts and night-visions of the aristocracy, the clergy, the landed gentry, the country lawyers, the well-to-do tradesmen; and they all rallied under the Tory banner. They firmly believed in Pitt's unfounded charge against the men of Liberal opinions:— "It is not reform they want, but Revolution"; and they lived in a terrified conviction that these dangerous characters, unless firmly repressed, would decapitate George the 3rd, establish a *sans-culotte* republic, confiscate their property, overthrow vested interests, and ruin trade. Ruin trade! No other two words in the English language convey to the average British mind such horrible ideas! The English shopkeeper would look on unmoved while a simoon swept past if it did not ruin trade.

It might have been supposed that Canning, sprung from the people, imbued with Whig traditions, patronised by the leaders of Whig Society, encouraged by Fox and Sheridan and Grey, would have taken a foremost place in the Whig ranks. But whether his sudden conversion be owing to the influence (as some authorities say) of William Godwin, or (as others say) of his college friend, Jenkinson; whether it be owing to an aristocratic strain in his blood which revolted at the revolutionary principles; or whether, as we are inclined to believe, it originated in a conviction that there was no room for him among the Whigs; certain it is that like another brilliant young adventurer half a century later, he "went over" to the Tories, who, in their then dearth of talent, eagerly welcomed so splendid a recruit. His reputation for wit and eloquence was so great that it

reached the ears of Mr. Pitt, who would also appear to have been apprised of his intended change of front.

The Minister sent for Canning, and after some personal explanations intimated that if he were prepared to support the Government policy, arrangements would be made to bring him into Parliament.* The offer was accepted†; and thus the Tories gained an ally whom they never fully trusted, but with whose services they were never able to dispense.‡

Lady Hester Stanhope professed, in after life, to have been present at this memorable interview; and appears to have taken a dislike to Canning, because his personal appearance displeased her. "The first time he was

* He had already refused a seat offered to him by the Whig Duke of Portland.

† Therry, i. 17.

‡ When Canning had determined on throwing in his lot with Pitt and the Pittites, he repaired to Mr. Sheridan, for whom he entertained a very strong affection, and announced his resolution. Lord Holland, who was present at the interview, told Lord Dalling that "nothing could be more respectful, affectionate, and unreserved, than the manner in which the ambitious young politician gave his reasons for the change he was prepared to make, or had made; nothing more warm-hearted, unprejudiced, and frank, than the veteran orator's reception of his retiring *protégé's* confusion; nor, indeed, could Mr. Sheridan help feeling the application, when he was himself cited as an example of the haughtiness with which 'the great Whig Houses' looked down on the lofty aspirations of mere genius." There were others among the Whigs, however, who looked upon the brilliant young apostate with less favourable eyes; and their sentiments were embodied in a severe stanza by Fitzpatrick:—

"The turning of coats so common is grown,
That no one would think to attack it;
But no case until now was so flagrantly known
Of a schoolboy turning his jacket."

introduced to Mr. Pitt," she says,* "a great deal of prosing had been made beforehand of his talents, and when he was gone, Mr. Pitt asked me what I thought of him. I said I did not like him; his forehead was bad, his eyebrows were bad, he was ill-made about the hips; but his teeth were evenly set, although he rarely showed them. I did not like his conversation. Mr. Canning heard of this, and some time after, when upon a more familiar footing with me, said, 'So, Lady Hester, you don't like me?' 'No,' said I, 'they told me you were handsome, and I don't think so.'" Lady Hester's eccentric conclusions no one would attempt to justify. In Canning's case, as in many other cases, it is difficult to understand how she could draw them from the premises at her command. Canning's contemporaries all speak of him as rich in physical as well as intellectual gifts. His figure was slight, but graceful; his features were well-formed; and his countenance arrested the spectator's eye by its wonderful play of expression. His address was graceful and dignified; his air that of a "thoroughbred" gentleman; while his voice, though not very strong, was clear, full, and melodious. As for his conversation, it sparkled with the sportiveness and vivacity which we admire in his writings, but was frequently relieved by a deeper shade of thought and feeling.

* 'Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope.'

II.

In the session of 1793 George Canning entered the House of Commons as M.P. for Newport, in the Isle of Wight.* He brought to Pitt the assistance he much needed; for no one of his recent accessions, except Windham, could withstand the formidable attacks of the Whig Opposition. Huskisson and Jenkinson were of the same age as Canning; but they had neither his energy nor his various powers. Jenkinson was useful and trustworthy in matters of detail; Huskisson, a man of real ability, wanted readiness, and as yet, indeed, had given but few indications of the solidity of his judgment and his mastery of financial subjects. Both became Canning's firm allies; and both admired the wit, the humour, the brilliant invective, the strenuous rhetoric which they could not imitate. Pitt's lieutenants had hitherto stood on the defensive; but Canning, eager,

* Mr. Grenville has put on record some anecdotes of Canning which he heard from Lord Holland. At college Lord Holland had been one of the statesman's intimate friends; and he said that, at that time, the beginning of the French Revolution, when a general excitement prevailed, Canning was a great Jacobin, much more so than he was himself; and that Canning had always hated the aristocracy ("a hatred which they certainly returned with interest"). Soon after his acceptance of the Governor-Generalship of India, Holland called on him, and Canning dined at Holland House. On one of these occasions the subject of conversation was Reform, which, in Canning's opinion, was inevitable. "He was not sorry," he said, "to be away while the measure was accomplished; but that had he been in England when it was mooted, "he would have *let those gentlemen* (the Whig aristocracy) *know that they should gain nothing by it.*"—'The Greville Memoirs,' iii. 135.

impetuous, self-reliant, pressed forward to the attack, and was soon seen to scatter confusion in the hostile ranks. It was characteristic of the man that his very first speech was delivered on a question which most novices would have gladly avoided, Mr. Pitt's motion for a grant of a subsidy of £200,000 a year to the King of Sardinia (January 31st, 1794). The motion necessarily involved the consideration of the entire policy of the Government, first, as related to the system of subsidies, and second, as to the justice and expediency of the war in which they had involved the country. Mr. Canning's speech fully justified his boldness. It was not a piece of youthful declamation, bristling with patriotic commonplaces; but an ingenious statement of the case of the Government, closely reasoned, and remarkable for the skill with which difficulties were evaded. He did not condescend to offer excuses for the war; but boldly declared that it had saved the country. It was owing to the war, he said, that the country had still a government; that the House of Commons had not been replaced by a revolutionary Society; and that its members retained the function of discussing the propriety of a subsidy to a friendly Power.* He adopted

* Lord Dalling, it must be owned, pronounces a very different verdict:— "This first speech (January 31st, 1794), like many first speeches of men who have become eminent orators, was more or less a failure. The subject was a subsidy to Sardinia, and the new member began with a scoff at the idea of looking with a mere mercantile eye at the goodness or badness of the bargain we were making. Such a scoff at economy, uttered in an assembly which is the especial guardian of the public purse, was injudicious. But the whole speech was bad; it possessed in an eminent degree all the ordinary faults of the declamations of clever young men. Its arguments were

the same line of reasoning in a speech in defence of the Alien Bill. Were it not for such a measure, he said, the towns of England would have been filled with French citizens, and French assignats would be circulating instead of Bank of England notes. This was a kind of practical Toryism which the meanest capacity could understand; and its exaggeration passed unnoticed by panic-stricken minds. That the young orator was prepared to go all lengths with the party he had joined was evident from his third speech, a fearless defence of one of Pitt's most unjustifiable measures, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

Taking advantage of the excited state of the public mind, Pitt moved for a bill to empower the Crown to secure and detain persons suspected of conspiring against the King's person and Government. Fox, Sheridan, Charles Grey, and their small band of devoted followers, faithful to the principles of the Constitution, strongly opposed the Bill, denying that any considerable disaffection existed among the people, or that the State was threatened by dangers such as could excuse or demand the surrender of the chief guarantee of the liberty of the subject. They pointed out that it gave the Ministry absolute power over every person in the kingdom; enabled them to arrest, on the merest suspicion, any

much too refined; its arrangement was much too systematic; cold, tedious, and unparliamentary, it would have been twice as good if it had attempted half as much; for the great art in speaking, as in writing, consists in knowing what should not be said or written."—LORD DALLING, 'Historical Characters,' pp. 217, 218.

individual of whose political opinions they disapproved. The members of the Opposition would not be safe. No advocate of parliamentary reform would be safe. Who, indeed, was, or could be safe, when the fears of the Government suspected conspiracies everywhere, and scented seditious designs in constitutional projects and language? Let every individual accused of treason, be brought to justice; and, in the words of Sheridan, "where there was guilt, let the broad axe fall"; but let not that House surrender the liberties of the innocent.

Even Canning's ingenuity could find no other reply to these powerful arguments,—founded, as they were, on the first principle of English law, that a man's innocence must be assumed until his guilt has been proved,—than to urge a plea of necessity. But the existence of this necessity he made no effort to establish, while he professed the greatest surprise that any doubt of it could be entertained. "Good God!" he exclaimed, with well-simulated astonishment, "how *can* gentlemen oppose a measure so obviously necessary?" The Opposition had threatened the Ministry with petitions against the bill. Neither he nor Mr. Pitt, he said, could be frightened by petitions so long as they felt that they were conscientiously discharging their duty to their country. Charles Grey had commented severely on Pitt's apostasy from the cause of Parliamentary Reform,* and his

* "William Pitt," he said, "the reformer of that day was William Pitt the prosecutor, ay, and persecutor too, of reformers now."—Parl. Hist. xxxi. 532. Lord Campbell says:—"He afterwards tried to hang a few of his brother reformers who continued steady in the cause."—'Lives of the Chief Justices,' ii. 544.

imprisonment of John Horne Tooke, who had formerly been associated with him in the movement. Canning took up the charge, admitted it, declared his entire agreement with Mr. Pitt in the course he had pursued, and added, that if Pitt should in the future return to his old opinions, then, too, he should in all probability agree with him again. That, of course, was the speech of a thorough partisan; and being also the speech of an ambitious young man, strongly attached to the patron who had opened up to him the path to place and power, it may be exempted from serious criticism. However weak in argument, the Ministry were strong in numbers; and the division showed 301 Ayes against 39 Noes. Insisting on its urgency, Pitt endeavoured to pass the Bill at once through all its stages. The Opposition made a gallant effort to gain time for an appeal to the judgment of the country; but in vain. "With free institutions," says Sir Erskine May,* "the people were now governed according to the principles of despotism. . . . Terrible, indeed, was the power entrusted to the executive.† Though termed a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, it was, in truth, a suspension of Magna Charta, and of the cardinal principles of the common law. Every man had hitherto been free from imprisonment until charged with crime, by information upon oath; and entitled to a speedy trial, and the judgment of his peers. But any subject could now be arrested on sus-

* Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History,' ii. 265.

† Lord Campbell observes, very truly, that had this power been fully exercised, "the only chance of escaping servitude would have been civil war."—'Lives of the Lord Chancellors', vi. 449.

picion of treasonable practices, without specific charge or proof of guilt: his accusers were unknown: and in vain might he demand public accusation and trial. Spies and treacherous accomplices, however circumstantial in their narratives to secretaries of state and law-offices, shrank from the witness-box; and their victims rotted in gaol.* Whatever the judgment, temper, and good faith of the executive, such a power was arbitrary, and could scarcely fail to be abused. Whatever the dangers by which it was justified,—never did the subject so much need the protection of the laws, as when government and society were filled with suspicion and alarm."† No doubt, a Government, in critical times, may justly ask to be armed with special powers, *ne quid detrimenti respublica caperet;* but no proof has ever been adduced of the existence of circumstances which justified Pitt's introduction and Canning's support of so excessive an interference with the liberties of the subject; and it is certain that the terrorism thus established did much to exasperate the minds of enthusiasts, and to provoke the very evils which the Ministry declared their anxiety to prevent.

We have used the word "terrorism"; and it does no

* Cooke reprobates "the iniquitous system of secret imprisonment, under which Pitt and Dundas had now filled all the gaols with parliamentary reformers; men who were cast into dungeons without any public accusation, and from whom the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act had taken every hope of redress."—'History of Party,' iii. 447.

† The Suspension Act was suffered to expire in the latter part of 1801. In the previous year, on the motion for its renewal, it was stated that twenty-nine persons had been imprisoned under its provisions, seven for more than three years, without being brought to trial.

more than accurately represent the action of the British Government at this period. One cannot but be astonished at the calmness with which it is regarded by writers who, could they have attributed to Walpole a similiar policy, would load it with the eloquence of invective. Yet Walpole held the reins of power in days when a large minority of the people were disaffected towards the reigning dynasty; when Scotland wavered on the brink of rebellion; while the military strength of the empire to oppose a possible coalition of European States was far inferior, comparatively, to its standard during the administration of Pitt. To carry on the war into which he had so unwisely entered,* Pitt could command a practically inexhaustible revenue, a large army, a well-equipped navy. The Sovereign's domestic virtues ensured the popularity of the throne; and no important section of the people desired to revolutionize, though willing to reform, existing institutions. Scotland was loyal and at peace. There was absolutely no excuse for the arbitrary measures by which the Minister sought to crush the free popular spirit of the country. But to persist in a war which was wholly unauthorized, the object of which no two of his own followers could agree upon, he proclaimed a Reign of Terror. For this purpose, as Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice remarks,† the doctrine of constructive treason was invented; and would have been embodied in English law but for the

* Lord Brougham tersely calls it "a flagrant political crime."

† Lord E. Fitzmaurice, 'Life of Shelburne,' iii. 531.

fearless eloquence of Erskine* and the independence of an English jury. For this purpose, the Traitorous Correspondence Bill widely extended the definition of treasonable offences, and proposed that a prisoner, on the evidence of a single witness, without the privilege of being defended by counsel, without even seeing a copy of the indictment on which he was tried, might be sentenced to capital punishment. For this purpose the Seditious Meetings Act attempted to extinguish popular discussion, by placing the power of dissolving a public meeting, and of seizing its leaders, in the hands of a common magistrate, appointed by the Crown, and removable at the pleasure of the Crown.†

In a pungent passage, with which the reader may be familiar, Mr. Buckle has described the political system which a man like Canning undertook to defend and support. The Ministry, as he not intemperately remarks, converted a party struggle into a war of proscription, filled the prisons with their opponents, and allowed

* "His speeches on Constructive Treason are noble performances; in which the reader never can forget the sublimity of the denunciation against those who took from "the file the sentence against Sidney, which should have been left on record to all ages, that it might arise and blacken in the sight, like the handwriting on the wall before the Eastern tyrant, to deter from outrage upon justice."—LORD BROUGHAM, 'Sketches of Statesmen,' i. 63.

† This law was truly Draconian; for it provided that if a meeting should consist of twelve, or more than twelve persons, who should remain together for one hour after being ordered to separate, then, it was to be adjudged "felony without benefit of clergy; and the offenders therein shall be adjudged felons, and shall suffer death as in case of felony without benefit of clergy."—36 George III. c. 8, § 6. Yet the promoters of this measure had the effrontery to talk of French tyranny.

them, in captivity, to be treated with shameful severity. For a man to be known as a reformer was to be in continual danger of arrest. If he escaped a prison, he was placed under constant espionage, and his private letters were opened as they passed through the post office. The sanctities of the domestic hearth were profaned. Discord was sown in the bosom of families; differences were caused between parents and their children. "Every man," writes the historian Roscoe, "is called on to be a spy upon his brother." Fox did not exaggerate when he declared that the government had "erected every man, not merely into an inquisitor, but into a judge, a spy, an informer,; had set father against father, and brother against brother" Not only were vigorous efforts made to silence the press, but so frequent were the prosecutions of booksellers, that they scarcely dared to publish a work if its author were obnoxious to the court. Horne Tooke had much difficulty, on this account, in finding a publisher for his 'Diversions of Purley.' * We have seen that political associations and public meetings were placed under a ban; that every popular leader was in personal danger. Spies were paid, witnesses bribed; and, when possible, juries packed. So that as Fox, in his speech on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill, observed, "Every man who talked freely, every man who detested, as he did from his heart, the war, might be, and would be, in the hands and at the mercy of ministers. Living under

* The first part was issued in 1786; but the second did not see the light until 1805.—Stephens, 'Memoirs of Tooke,' ii. 345–348.

such a government, and being subject to insurrection, comparing the two evils, he confessed he thought the evil they were pretending to remedy was less than the one they were going to inflict by the remedy itself."* Yet such a system, Canning, fresh from the society of his Whig associates, and from the study of authors breathing the spirit of liberty, was found prepared to advocate and support.

During the first three years of his parliamentary career, he was not, however, a frequent speaker. He seconded the Address on the opening of the session, December 30, 1794; and in the following year, on the 25th of March, he spoke against Mr. Fox's motion for a Committee on the State of the Nation. His services were rewarded by his appointment, before the close of the session, to the office of Foreign Under Secretary of State, his chief being Lord Grenville. For the next two years he took but a very slight part in parliamentary discussion, devoting himself to the assiduous discharge of the duties of his office. Writing to his friend, Lord Borringdon, he says: — "I wonder what sort of times those must have been when there were no armies to watch, no conflicts to apprehend, and when Europe had no fate depending. I fancy a summer passed in Downing Street must have been a very different thing at such a period; and that I should hardly have got on, as I have now done, to the middle of August, I will not say without missing, or regretting the society which I

* 'Parliamentary History,' xxxi. 509.

have lost, certainly without any distressing impatience of my solitude. The happiness of constant occupation is infinite; the pleasanter, perhaps, to my feelings from its being more new to them, than, perhaps, it ought to have been." We may quote from the same letter a reference to Pitt, which shows the friendly character of the relations between the great Minister and his subordinate *:—"He is not so close a prisoner in town as I am, but he seldom leaves town without giving me such a map of his proceedings as enables me to follow him whenever I find, or can contrive for myself, an evening of leisure—an advantage which I seldom fail to take whenever his destination is to Holwood. I have seen him much there, and for the most part alone, and I think I have never left him without liking him better than before. I could not admire or love him more, even if I had no obligations to him; though, in that case, I should give a freer, because less suspicious testimony of the claims which, I think, he has to be both loved and admired."

* A. G. Stapleton, 'George Canning and his Times,' pp. 37, 38.

III.

THOUGH Canning's eloquent tongue was silent in the House of Commons, he was lending the Government considerable "extra-official" assistance by his facile and brilliant pen. The Whigs, since the beginning of the war, had made vigorous use of the Press to diffuse a sound knowledge of the doctrines of constitutional government and popular freedom. Canning was too keen of sight not to detect the advantage they had gained by this literary propaganda; and resolved upon turning against them their own weapons, or rather the lighter artillery of ridicule and satire. With this view he conceived the idea of a journal to be published weekly, and devoted to the incessant attack of what were then termed "revolutionary principles," and the unsparing abuse of those who espoused them. The title of the new periodical indicated its character: 'The Anti-Jacobin' proclaimed in its forefront the intention of its writers to champion the old abuses and assail reforming "innovations." The prospectus was written by Canning; but as his official duties occupied so much of his time, the editorship of the paper was given to Gifford, the author of the ponderous satires of 'The Baviad' and 'The Mæviad."* Among the young wits enlisted as contributors were John Hookham Frere,† Mr. Jenkinson, Mr.

* William Gifford (1757–1826) was afterwards editor of 'The Quarterly Review,' and of the works of Massinger, Ben Jonson, Ford, and Shirley. He is best known by his translation of Juvenal.

† John Hookham Frere (1769–1846) will be remembered by his admirable translation of the plays of Aristophanes; and by the humour and

George Ellis, Lord Morpeth, and Lord Mornington (afterwards Marquis Wellesley). The first number appeared on Monday, the 20th of November, 1797: the last, on the 9th of July, 1798. The contents were partly in prose and partly in verse; the happiest, certainly, being those in verse, and among these the best being due to Canning. Of the former, it seems unnecessary to give any specimens. They are chiefly political; very violent, very personal, very unfair, and sometimes not a little indecorous.* Turning to the poetical compositions, we find it difficult to decide in some cases what portions belong to Canning, as several collaborators frequently worked together. In the 'Loves of the Triangles,' an exceedingly felicitous burlesque of Dr. Erasmus Darwin's 'Loves of the Plants,' Frere was Canning's assistant, and the conception and outline were entirely his. The airy grace and sportive extravagance of Canning are visible, however, in the following passages:—

"Lo! where the chimney's sooty tube ascends,
The fair TROCHAIS from the corner bends!
The coal black eyes upturned, incessant mark
The eddying smoke, quick flame, and volant spark;
Mark with quick ken, where flashing in between,
The much-loved *Smoke Jack* glimmers thro' the scene;
Mark, how his various parts together tend,
Point to one purpose,— in one object end;

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fancy of the poetical extravaganza of 'The Monks and Giants,' which he published under the *nom de plume* of William and Robert Whistlecraft. It suggested to Byron the metrical form of his 'Beppo' and 'Don Juan.'

* Wilberforce mentions in his Diary (May 18, 1799), that, meeting Canning at Holwood, he had "attacked him on the indecency of the 'Anti-Jacobin.'" *Life*, p. 207.

The spiral *grooves* in smooth meanders flow,
Drags the long *chain*, the polished axles glow,
While slowly circumvolves the piece of beef below:
The conscious fire with bickering radiance burns,
Eyes the rich joint, and roasts it as it turns.
So youthful Horner rolled the roguish eye,
Cull'd the dark plum from out his Christmas pie,
And cried in self applause,— 'How good a boy am I.'"

To Canning may also be attributed a clever parody on Southey's 'Inscription for the Apartment in Chepstow Castle where Henry Marten, the Regicide, was imprisoned thirty years.' It was as follows:—

Inscription

For the Door of the Cell in Newgate, where Mrs. Brownrigg, the 'Prenticecide,' was confined previous to her Execution.*

For one long term, or ever her trial came,
Here Brownrigg lingered. Often have these cells
Echoed her blasphemies, as with shrill voice
She screamed for fresh Geneva. Not to her
Did the blithe fields of Tothill, or thy street,

* For the convenience of the reader we subjoin the original of Southey:—

For thirty years secluded from mankind
Here Marten lingered. Often have these walls
Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread
He paced around his prison: not to him
Did Nature's fair varieties exist;
He never saw the sun's delightful beams,
Save when through yon high bars he pour'd a sad
And broken splendour. Dost thou ask his crime?
He had rebell'd against the King, and sat
In judgment on him; for his ardent mind
Shaped goodliest plans of happiness on earth,
And peace and liberty. Wild dreams! but such
As Plato lov'd; such as with holy zeal
Our Milton worshipp'd. Blurr'd hopes! awhile
From man withheld, even to the latter days
When Christ shall come, and all things be fulfill'd!

St. Giles, its fair varieties expand:
Till at the last, in slow drawn cart she went
To execution. Dost thou ask her crime?
She whipped two female 'prentices to death,
And hid them in the coal hole. For her mind
Shaped strictest plans of discipline. Sage schemes!
Such as Lycurgus taught, when at the shrine
Of the Orthyan goddess he bade flog
The little Spartans; such as erst chastised
Our Milton, when at college. For this act
Did Brownrigg swing. Harsh laws! But time shall come
When France shall reign, and laws be all repealed!

To Canning also belongs one of the most famous imitations in the language, 'The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder,' written as a burlesque upon Southey's poem of 'The Widow,' an experiment in English Sapphics. His, too, is the well known song * of Rogero in 'The Rovers' (a satire on the sentimental dramas of Kotzebue and the German School), and parts of the racy dialogue and "stage directions" are unquestionably from his pen. A Latin poem, 'De Navali Laude Britanniæ" (July 9, 1798) is given to him by Mr. Edmonds, in his edition of 'The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin,' but the versification is not very good. The following allusion to Greenwich Hospital is about the most successful bit:—

"Cerno pias ædes procul, et regalia quondam
Atris, cæruleis quæ preterlabitur undis
Velivolus Thamesis; materno ubi denique nautas
Excipio amplexu, virtus quoscumque virilis
Per pelagi impulerit discrimina, quælibet ausos
Pro patriâ. Hic æde donantur, dulcique senescunt
Hospitio emeriti, placidâque quieto potiti
Vulnera præteritos jactant testantia casus."

* The last stanza was improvised by Pitt.

'The Progress of Man,' written in ridicule of a work by Mr. R. Payne Knight, 'The Progress of Civil Society,' bears evident marks of Canning's satiric genius. We take these lines to be decidedly his:—

"Let us a plainer, steadier theme pursue;
Mark the grim savage scoop his light canoe;
Mark the dark rook, on pendant branches hung,
With anxious fondness feed her craving young,—
Mark the fell leopard through the desert prowl,
Fish prey on fish, and fowl regale on fowl;—
How Lybian tigers' chawdrons love assails,
And warms midst seas of ice the melting whales;—
Cools the crimpt cod, fierce pangs to perch imparts,
Shrinks shrivelled shrimps, but opens oysters' hearts;—
Then say, how all these things together tend
To one great truth, prime object, and good end."

The ablest, as well as the most ambitious, composition in the 'Anti-Jacobin' is, by common consent, the poem of 'New Morality,' which contains many spirited lines and some strokes of just satire. Mr. Edmonds describes it as the joint work of Canning, Frere, Gifford, and George Ellis, but adds that Canning's share was so very much the largest as to entitle him to be considered the author.* The following lines are always apportioned to him:—

"'Much may be said on both sides.' Hark! I hear
A well-known voice that murmurs in my ear,—
The voice of CANDOUR. Hail! most solemn sage,
Thou drivelling virtue of this moral age.

* "'New Morality' is commonly regarded as the masterpiece of the 'Anti-Jacobin;' and, with the exception of a few lines, the whole of it is by Canning. It appeared in the last number, and he is said to have concentrated all his energies for a parting blow. The reader who comes fresh from Dryden, or Pope, or even Churchill, will be disappointed on finding

CANDOUR, which soften's party's headlong rage.
CANDOUR,—which spares its foes, nor e'er descends
With bigot zeal to combat for its friends.
CANDOUR,—which lives in see-saw strain to tell
Of *acting foolishly*, but *meaning well;*
Too nice to praise by wholesale, or to blame,
Convinced that *all* men's *motives* are the same;
And finds, with their discriminating sight,
BLACK's not so black;—nor WHITE so *very* white.

"FOX, to be sure, was vehement and wrong:
But then, PITT's words, you'll own, were *rather* strong.
Both must be blamed, both pardon'd; 'twas just so
With FOX and PITT full forty years ago!
So WALPOLE, PULTENEY;—factions in all times
Have had their follies, ministers their crimes."

Give me th'avow'd, th' erect, the manly foe,
Bold I can meet—perhaps may turn his blow;
But of all plagues, good Heav'n, thy wrath can send,
Save, save, oh! save me from the *Candid Friend!*"

The resentment provoked by the fierce truculent personal attacks of 'the Anti-Jacobin,' which pursued Fox into his retirement at St. Ann's Hill, accused Coleridge of having deserted his wife and children,

far less variety of images, sparkling antithesis, or condensed brilliancy of expression. The author exhibits abundant humour and elegance, but comparatively little wit; if there be any truth in Sydney Smith's doctrine, 'that the feeling of wit is occasioned by those relations of ideas which excite surprise, and surprise *alone*.' We are commonly prepared for what is coming, and our admiration is excited rather by the justness of the observations, the correctness of the thoughts, and the vigour of the style, than by a startling succession of flashes of fancy. If, as we believe, the same might be said of Juvenal, and the best of his English imitators, Johnson, we have ample scope for praise; and 'New Morality' contains passages which have been preserved to our time, and bid fair to reach posterity, by their poetry and truth."—Edinburgh Review, cviii. 120.

and defamed the character of every man, whatever his position or his virtues, who dared to advocate the most moderate measures of reform, was such that Pitt thought it advisable to discontinue its publication. There was certainly an obvious injustice in persecuting and punishing the Opposition writers, when the calumniators of 'the Anti-Jacobin' escaped scot-free! It may be doubted, however, whether it really exercised the influence which has sometimes been ascribed to it. Ridicule may be the test of truth, but cannot become its destroyer. The personal injuries inflicted by Gifford and his colleagues may have given pain; but their invectives against principles were powerless, because unsupported by arguments. Hence almost all that lives of the satire of 'the Anti-Jacobin' is that which was directed against literary follies. The irony of 'The Needy Knife-Grinder' was well applied, and, therefore, will always be appreciated; and enough of Attic salt is found in the humour of 'The Rovers' to preserve its flavour for all time.

IV.

CANNING, as a statesman, does not come prominently before us until 1798. The country was then weary of the war and of the burdens it entailed. Lord Grenville, writing in the previous year, had said:—"It is a curious speculation in history to see how often the good people of England have played this game over and over again, and how incorrigible they are in it. To desire war without reflection—to be unreasonably elated with success—to be still more unreasonably depressed by difficulties—and to call out for peace with an impatience which makes suitable terms unattainable,—are the established maxims and the regular progress of the popular mind in this country." But this criticism had in it a strong element of injustice. It was not the people who desired the war; it was the King's war; promoted by him and the Minister who yielded to him, and encouraged by Burke and his followers. Nor had they had much reason to be elated with success. The honour of England had been nobly maintained by its navy; but its military expeditions, badly planned and feebly led, had been signally disastrous. Lord Grenville was right, indeed, in his assertion that the people were most impatient for peace. But so was Pitt himself, whom a bitter experience had convinced of the folly of his original hypothesis, that the exhaustion of her resources would quickly compel France to yield. It is now known that while, in Parliament, the Government

resisted every motion of a pacific tendency brought forward by the Opposition, it was secretly carrying on negotiations with the French Directory. The unconstitutional duplicity of this conduct deserves to be severely censured; but it was rendered worse by the double action that took place within the Government, Pitt being desirous of peace on reasonable terms, and Lord Grenville insisting upon conditions which he knew the Directory could not and would not grant.

On the 11th of December, 1798, Mr. Twining brought forward a motion recommending negotiations for peace, urging that the European confederacy against France was dissolved, and that, with a debt increased by one hundred and fifty millions, an annual expenditure increased by eight millions, a press gagged and the people fettered, England should now attend to her own interest, and cease to fight the battles of Europe. Canning replied in one of his ablest speeches, stating with the greatest ingenuity every argument that could be urged in favour of a vigorous prosecution of the war. His picture of the condition of Europe was very vivid; though it failed to meet the objection of those who argued that it was not the duty of England, nor was it within her power, to act as the champion of every European nation. "The map of Europe," he said, "is before you. I can only say that I do not admire that man's intellect, and I do not envy that man's feelings, who can look over that map without gathering some notion of what is meant by the deliverance of Europe. I do not envy that man's feelings who can behold the sufferings of Switzerland, and who derives from that sight no idea of

what is meant by the deliverance of Europe. I do not envy the feelings of that man who can look without emotion at Italy—plundered, insulted, trampled upon, exhausted, covered with ridicule, and horror and devastation; who can look at all this, and be at a loss to guess what is meant by the deliverance of Europe. As little do I envy the feelings of that man who can view the people of the Netherlands driven into insurrection, and struggling for their freedom against the heavy hand of a merciless tyranny, without entertaining any suspicion of what may be the sense of the word deliverance. Does such a man contemplate Holland groaning under arbitrary oppressions and exactions? Does he turn his eyes to Spain trembling at the nod of a foreign master? and does the word deliverance still sound unintelligibly in his ears? Has he heard of the rescue and salvation of Naples by the appearance and the triumphs of the British fleet?* Does he know that monarchy of Naples maintains its existence at the sword's point? And is his understanding, is his heart, still impenetrable to the sense and meaning of the deliverance of Europe?"

This speech established Mr. Canning's reputation both as an orator and a rising politician. Not a few persons were irritated by his success; for his manners, his confident bearing, and his reckless satire had sowed an abundant crop of enmities. A contemporary who met him at Holwood about this time remarks, "What envy I saw of him universally!" The Whigs looked upon

* This was premature. In the following January the French entered Naples and established the Parthenopean Republic, which lasted until June, when Nelson arrived in command of a powerful fleet.

him as a deserter from their ranks; and Grey and Tierney, and others, were accustomed to mark their contempt of his apostasy by leaving the House whenever he rose to speak. Among the Tories he was scarcely better liked; some, perhaps, suspecting his sincerity, others feeling jealous of the encouragement he received from Pitt. It is characteristic of the levity with which he sometimes treated serious subjects that he delivered, on one occasion, an animated speech in defence of bull-baiting; but afterwards, when he received from Wilberforce an account of the cruelties which it involved, he owned that "he was quite ashamed of himself." On the other hand, it should be recorded that whatever his variations on certain questions of home-politics, or however unwise and unenlightened his opposition to parliamentary reform, he was the consistent advocate of the abolition of Slavery.

Towards the end of the year 1799, a prospect arose of the resignation by Mr. Dundas of the post he then held, the Home Secretaryship of State, and Canning aspired to be his successor. The resignation did not take place; and Canning had to wait some years for the gratification of his ambition. But a vivid illustration of the energy of his character, and of the spirit which disposed him, at all events, in the earlier portion of his career, to regard politics as a means of personal advancement, is supplied by a letter which he wrote to his confidential friend, Lord Borringdon, upon this subject. Thus he says:— "I think it by no means improbable that the first vacancy which will occur may be the highest, and that (happen what may in the interval) *that* may be put off

till the end of the session. Even supposing a lesser vacancy to occur in the meantime, I think the greater will still take place; perhaps at no more distant time, which would, even in that case, be a matter of serious grievance to me, if any other person, not already in the natural course of succession above me, were to fill it; for, through whatever gradations I may pass to it, I think you will agree with me that *there* is the point at which, *at some time or other*, I must endeavour to arrive." He adds, and his language has a significant touch of genuine feeling, springing from a consciousness, perhaps, that, so far, he was simply playing a part,—"Tell me what [other] chance I ever have of being placed in a situation in which (whatever may be its rank or emolument, or whatever consideration I may contrive to attract by House of Commons' service) I can, in respect to the real effective business of the country, be any other than a private, unavowed and irresponsible adviser—a situation which has all the anxiety which belongs to office, without the activity and exertion which serve to lighten that anxiety, and to turn it to advantage; and all the invidiousness which belongs to power, without the means of defending itself, or the consolation of doing good to others; a situation in which (to sum up all its discomforts and disgraces in one word) one may have laboured half a year to rouse a proper spirit, and to confirm a just determination, upon such a question as the Slave Trade, and then having the mortification of having all one's hopes overthrown with impunity by a speech and a canvass of Lord Westmorland."

This unresting desire for high office, this greed of

power, not, it must be owned, an unusual accompaniment of a temperament and a genius like Canning's, explains what would be otherwise mysterious and perplexing in his political conduct. It decided him in his choice of the Tory party as that which, from its then dearth of men of courage and capacity, offered him the readier means of advancement. It bound him to Pitt, and afterwards to the Duke of Portland. It determined his course upon domestic questions, and inclined him towards a reactionary, or, at least, a hesitating policy, which can hardly have been congenial to his nature or in accordance with his secret sympathies. The real liberalism of his views he was free to act upon in foreign affairs, for Toryism has not always been, nor is it necessarily, identified with the principles of absolutism and repression on the Continent. He could baffle the projects of the Holy Alliance, or recognize the independence of the Spanish colonies in America, without absolutely forfeiting the confidence of his party; certainly without provoking such an outburst of anger as would have followed his advocacy of any measure of parliamentary reform. Therefore, a Tory at home, he was a Liberal abroad. It may be said that this explanation implies a charge of insincerity against him. We do not think he was consciously insincere. We believe he looked upon politics very much as a game, in which the best player won the most stakes; and that he never considered very seriously what kind of counters he played with. Sensible of his possession of rare endowments, what he most cared for was a position worthy of them, and a position in which he could use them worthily. Moreover, during the long

and desperate struggle with Napoleon he may really have felt, and it would seem he *did* feel, that difficult home questions ought not to distract the energies of parliaments or administrations. Finally, it is to be remembered that, in his later years, he showed a marked disposition to approach the party which had always been faithful to the cause of progress.

Though moved, as we believe, by a most strenuous ambition, Canning was not a place-hunter. It was power he loved, not place; place only for the sake of power; and he could abandon office without a murmur when its retention would not help him forward on the path to power. He was too clear-sighted a politician not to see that England does not love in her public men a contemptuous disregard of leading principles, nor an unscrupulous indifference to party claims. And when he had thrown in his lot with Toryism, he knew that more was to be gained by a faithful adherence to it than by a retrocession towards the Whigs. When Pitt retired, on account of the Catholic question (February, 1801), he strongly urged Canning to retain his Under-Secretaryship, and accept Addington as his chief. But, apart from a generous sense of all he owed to Pitt, and a genuine feeling of personal attachment towards him, Canning felt that a retention of office would by no means facilitate his future advancement. He knew that Addington could not long maintain his position, and that it was more profitable as well as more magnanimous to link his fortunes to those of the great statesman who, before long, would unquestionably resume the conduct of public affairs. But his resentment against Addington,

who had thus become an obstacle in his path, exhibited a gall and a bitterness unusual in political rivalries, and only to be paralleled by Pulteney's hatred of Walpole. We do not doubt that it was justified in the main upon public grounds; that Canning was honestly convinced of "the Doctor's" inefficiency; that he was just as honestly convinced that Pitt was the only man competent to govern the country in a season of supreme danger; but no impartial student of Canning's career can refuse to acknowledge that he was actuated also by personal motives. Addington had crossed his path; and he hated him for doing so. The antipathy grew stronger as the prospect of Addington's inviting him to join his government, a prospect not improbable at first, faded into the distance. Writing to his friend, Lord Borringdon, in October, 1801, he refers to some individual unnamed who had corresponded with the former on this very subject. "We certainly agree," he says, "so far, that to have taken office at the time, and in the manner prescribed by Pitt, would have been (to use his own expression) *ruinous*. We agree, too, in thinking that there is, perhaps no *physical* impossibility (I mean no allusion) in Addington and my, some time or other, acting in the same Government; in my acting '*under*' him if he will, so far as Addington's continuing in the situation he now holds makes any other office in the Government, in one sense, subordinate, though I think this event much less probable than — seems to do. ... The sentiments which — expresses, and the line which he chalks out for me, are so entirely the reverse of anything that I am inclined to adopt or to pursue,

that I have sometimes thought for a moment that he was only trying me; that he was putting an exaggerated case of baseness and duplicity, in order to see whether a summer out of office had so far subdued me as that I should be too happy by this time to exchange freedom of thought, and consistency of speech, for the most distant chance of rendering myself agreeable to Mr. Addington." In the same letter he lays down, very frankly, the guiding principle of his career: — "If he ask me," he says, "how then am I to arrive at the objects of my ambition? I answer, that the putting this question in that shape is a proof that we misunderstand each other, and look at the subject before us in a very different point of view. I must act as I think right. My road must be through *character* to power; that I may take this road and miss the end is very possible; nay, that by acting as I think right, I may not, as surely as I expect it, get even to my second stage— character — is very possible also; but *that* I cannot help. I will try no other course; and I am sanguine enough to believe that, after all, this course, though not perhaps the quickest, is the surest." He adds: — "In the meantime, what is to become of me? and if A. should never think me worth having upon my own terms, what am I to do? I am much indebted to — for that anxiety for my welfare which prompts such reflections; but really I do not feel for myself the same despondency, nor see the same difficulty in my situation. I mean to have an independent seat in Parliament; I mean never to set my foot within the doors of the House of Commons again, till I can speak and act in that House

according to my own judgment purely, without reference to the will of any other man. 'You will not oppose Pitt surely?' God forbid; but I will never again put myself in a situation in Parliament, in which, from any *other* motive than of faction and attachment, I MUST vote with him. I will never again be in a situation in which I shall feel myself, as I have felt myself in the instance of the question of this day, obliged in honour to say, 'Such are my opinions, but if with *those opinions* YOU think I ought to vote for the peace with *you*, I ought and will.'"

"Through *character* to power!' This was Canning's watchword, and by no means an ignoble one, but, evidently, his political creed was so far elastic that it could be stretched in one direction or another, so long as the elasticity did not compromise his character. His recent marriage (July 8th, 1800) to Miss Joan Scott, daughter and co-heiress to General Scott, and sister to the Duchess of Portland, had greatly improved his position, and entitled him to look forward to a distinguished career. It was, however, a marriage of affection; and, to the last day of his life, Canning found in his graceful and accomplished wife one who could sympathize with his aspirations, share his anxieties, and participate in his counsels. Their domestic happiness was without a cloud, and their home the centre of all the social virtues.

In pursuance of his expressed determination "never to set foot within the House of Commons again till he could speak and act according to his own judgment purely without reference to the will of any other man,"

Canning absented himself from Parliament until after the dissolution in 1802, when he was returned, without Pitt's aid, for the borough of Tralee. He then entered upon a line of the strongest hostility against Addington, though Pitt at that time was lending the Ministry his partial support. His avowed object was to expel Addington, and restore Pitt to power, with or without the latter's active concurrence. With this view he assailed him in the House and out of the House; attacking him and his policy, or want of policy, in a succession of vigorous speeches and in pasquinades and epigrams almost without number.* His admiration of Pitt, to

* His opposition to the administration of Mr. Addington was eloquently explained and not unsuccessfully vindicated in a speech which he delivered on the Army Estimates, on December 8th, 1802:—

"I do think," he said, "that this is a time when the administration of the Government ought to be in the ablest and fittest hands. I do not think the hands in which it is now placed answer to that description. I do not pretend to conceal in what quarter I think that fitness most eminently resides. I do not subscribe to the doctrines which have been advanced, that, in times like the present, the fitness of individuals for their political situations is no part of the consideration to which a Member of Parliament may fairly turn his attention. I know not a more solemn or important duty that a Member of Parliament can have to discharge than by giving, at fit seasons, a free opinion upon the character and qualities of public men. Away with the cant of measures, not men; the idle supposition that it is the harness, and not the horses, that drew the chariot along. No, sir; if the comparison must be made, if the distinction must be taken, measures are comparatively nothing, men everything. I speak, sir, of times of difficulty and danger, of times when systems are shaken, precedents and general rules of conduct fail. Then it is that not to this or that measure, however prudently devised, however blameless in execution, but to the energy and character of individuals a state must be indebted for its salvation. Then it is that kingdoms rise and fall in proportion as they are upheld, not by well-meant endeavours (however laudable these may be),

whom he had done no small service by the issue of his well-known song, 'The Pilot that weathered the storm,' was unquestionably sincere; and not less sincere was his scorn for the inefficiency of the man whom the King's favour, and a combination of circumstances, had placed at the head of affairs. The Premier he ridiculed incessantly; he satirised his nepotism, his feebleness, his timidity, his want of decision at home, and his want of dignity abroad. He exposed him to general laughter by nicknaming him "the Doctor," in allusion to his father's attendance upon Lord Chatham as his family physician, a piece of good fortune which came to him through his being accidentally called on to prescribe for the great Earl's coachman. Nicknames *stick* in England, and Addington was everywhere, and by every one, dubbed "The Doctor." On one occasion, when the Minister had been forsaken by his usual supporters among the Scotch members, Sheridan bent across the table, and exclaimed,

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but by commanding, over-awing talent, by able men. And what is the nature of the times in which we live? Look at France, and see what we have to cope with, and consider what has made her what she is—a man! You will tell me that she was great, and powerful, and formidable before the date of a Bonaparte's government, that he found in her great moral and physical resources, that he had but to turn them to account. True; and he did so. Compare the situation in which he found France with that to which he has raised her. I am no panegyrist of Bonaparte; but I cannot shut my eyes to the superiority of his talents, to the amazing ascendancy of his genius. Tell me not of his measures and his policy. It is his genius, his character, that keeps the world in awe. Sir, to meet, to check, to curb, to stand up against him, we want arms of the same kind. I am far from objecting to the large military establishments which are proposed to you,—I vote for them with all my heart. But, for the purpose of coping with Bonaparte, one great commanding spirit is worth them all!"

amidst a shout of laughter,—"Doctor! the thanes flee from thee!" Canning himself founded many a lampoon upon it. The nature of the storm which beat about the unfortunate Minister's head may be inferred from the following specimens of Canning's satirical verse.

THE DOCTOR: AN ODE.*

Scene:—Treasury Chambers.

"I do remember an apothecary
And here about he dwells."—*Romeo.*

Doctor! Doctor! What doses! narcotic, emetic,
Diuretic, cathartic, or diaphoretic—
What injections, or lotions,
Plasters, powders, or potions;
What decoctions, what blisters, what glysters, what pills,
What bark, rhubarb, or senna, salts, manna, or squills,
Can retrieve your poor country's deplorable case,
Her destruction avert, or repair her disgrace?
When, with gait consequential and *dignified* pace,
You were strutting behind little C——'s mace;
When you mov'd to the chair
With so solemn an air—
When your looks were so pompous, important, and dull
When your gown was so ample, your wig was so full,—
With what rapture we own'd, as the farce we survey'd,
That the *chair* and the *Speaker* of one block were made!
But, dear Doctor! this case is quite out of your line!
Though with Hob—'s or Hawkey's your wisdom you join,
Though you may prate and debate
About matters of state,
With V—t, and H—vey, and H—y, and B—ge,†
You've surrender'd our conquests, dishonour'd our *flag*—
You've disbanded our *army*, dismantled our *fleet*,
And *in vain su'd for peace* at the *Corsican's* feet!
Yet no adverse ingredients in *nostrums* are found,
These *low deeds* with *high words* you still love to compound,

* 'Spirit of the Public Journals,' vii. 197.

† Vansittart, Hervey, Hiley, Bragge.

Where so mingled appear
Both your pride and your fear,
That no mortal can guess what the truth of the *fact is*,
Oh! quit then your patient, or alter your practice;
Little *peace* can she hope for, small *respite* or *ease*,
While she takes your *prescriptions* and you take her *fees*.

To a newspaper called 'The Oracle' Canning contributed several lively and effective squibs. We find one of a somewhat elaborate character, entitled "Hints to the Minister!" * which is in the true Canning style. Thus it runs:—

HINTS TO THE MINISTER!

In the spirit of fairness, which, we hope, has always distinguished our labours, we lay before the public a portion of an elaborate poem which has been sent to us, containing some most excellent advice to Mr. Ad——n. Our limits will not allow of our giving the whole of this vigorous composition, nor to analyse it with critical severity; but that our readers may judge for themselves we shall extract the following specimen, both of the text and note. The title is,

THE STONE EXPEDITION:
or,
The Doctor's head good for Something! ! !

The poet, after a description of the causes and nature of the plan, and of the vessels employed in the expedition, of which, to say the truth, he does not speak too favourably,—(in order, we suppose, the more to recommend the *expedient* which is the main object of his work)—thus continues:—

"Invading myriads Gallia's shores possess,
While our *stone fleet* is fixed at Dungeness!
Dear hopes are fled from sandbank, filth and mud;
Stone is too buoyant for th' opposing flood!"

He then boldly and poetically apostrophises *the Doctor* in the following spirited lines:—

"Thou who hast dragg'd thy country down so low,
To save her yet might'st Roman virtue show;

* Reprinted in 'The Spirit of the Public Journals,' vii. 227.

That *ponderous head*, which ne'er presumed to think
But England totter'd on perdition's brink—
That head, where *army*, *navy*, and *finance*
Are jerk'd about like puppets in a dance;
Where all is chaos, where no reason's light
Breaks forth to brighten the Bœotian night—
That *head*—that *leaden cranium*—wouldst thou lend,
To the world's centre must the mass descend;
Neptune would tremble at th' impulsive force
Of such a plummet and permit its course!
This act shall purge from sin thy guilty soul,
Atone for many a job and action foul;
Buried shall be for this in endless night,
Thy wild presumption and ambition's flight—
Amiens' sad peace we'll from our memories blot,
E'en thy perpetual nonsense be forgot;
H[ile]y and B[rag]ge no vengeance shall pursue—
Contempt shall spare the others of the crew.
Britons, rejoice! The sacrifice is made,
And a vast debt to injured Albion's paid.
A second Curtius claims a nation's love
For the first act that nation could approve.
Doctor, adieu!—Through the green deep, in thee,
The kernel of the gathering heap we see!
Slime, soft and smoother then thy smoothest speech,
Shall, to augment thee, lave their neighbouring beach;
A viscous coating for thy length provide,
And double all thy volume in a tide.
Boulogne, from fragrant Cloacinian store,
Strata on *strata*, shall unconscious pour;
Seaweed and spawn shall on thy sides be spread,
And kindred oysters find a welcome bed.
There flat-fish, flattest of their tasteless race,
Insipid maids and all disgusting plaice,
With the fat porpoise there shall roll and play;
Thither no lively thing shall point its way.
Birds of the heaviest wing and slowest flight,
The dullest of their tribes shall there invite;
With tones as wearying as thy own, thy ghost delight!
Meanwhile the Consul sees the lump appear,
Blasphemes and storms, and weeps, and tears his hair!"

The poet then proceeds to state the coming out of the flotilla, for the attack of England, in spite of the Ad—onian mudbank. We regret that we have no room to insert the spirited description of the various losses of the enemy; some ships having their bottoms beaten out by striking on the Doctor's *os frontis*; others foundering on his occiput, etc. etc.

Notes for the Continuation.

Mr. Vansittart proposes to the Cabinet to visit, in a diving-bell, the remains of the late Dr. Ad—n, now, for his country's sake, converted into a mudbank. They all admit the propriety of paying this tribute of gratitude to a person once so respected by and dear to them; but make different excuses for declining the enterprise. Lord Hawkesbury is always sick in a diving-bell. Lord Castlereagh cannot absent himself from his office till the arrival of despatches from India shall inform him why we are at war in that country. Lord St. Vincent, from the first, washed his hands of the project, it being a naval enterprise in which the Admiralty did not interfere. Mr. Secretary Yorke was entirely occupied in framing a question for the Attorney-General's opinion, in order to ascertain the real meaning of his (Mr. Yorke's) last explanatory bill respecting the Volunteers, and the defence of the country against an invasion which the Administration believed would have taken place nine months ago. Mr. Vansittart then applies to others, but without success; makes an impression on Mr. Sheridan; Mr. Tierney cannot leave unfinished a pamphlet in which he means to prove that our ships lost by the war, or worn out by the hard service to which they have been exposed, need not be replaced with new ones from either the Merchants' or His Majesty's dockyards, etc.

These satirical effusions illustrate in so striking a manner the lighter qualities of Canning's genius, as well as the depth of his political animosity against Addington, that we venture to place before the reader a couple of additional specimens in prose. The following belongs to the days of the Minister's decline and fall.*

THE DOCTOR'S SALE.

Advertisement Extraordinary.

Will be Sold by Auction,

In the course of a few days, on the premises in Downing Street,

All the *Entire Stock* in *Trade*, *Fixtures*, *Medical* and *Electrical Apparatus*,

* Reprinted in 'The Spirit of the Public Journals,' viii. 268.

Live Stock, together with all the *nostrums*, *prescriptions*, *recipes*, *patents*, *pamphlets*, *manuscripts*, and *printed books*, the undoubted property of a certain *celebrated empiric*, F.R.S. and A.S.S. retiring from Trade. N.B.—The house is distinguished by a large brass-knocker on the door. A backdoor into the park for private patients. (May *4th*, 1804).

This was followed on the 8th of May by a continuation of the *jeu d'esprit*:—

THE DOCTOR'S SALE.

Mr. EDITOR,—

Having seen in your very valuable paper ['The Oracle'] a hint given of the intended Sale of the Goods and Chattels of my brother, in Downing Street, I am desired by him to express his sense of the Advantage likely to be derived from such an intention being known through the medium of your very extensive and widely circulated paper. At his desire, therefore, I enclose you a list of the manuscripts in my possession, and which he thinks might be disposed of by private contract, and by giving to the world the advantage of perusing their titles, through the same respectable conveyance, you will confer a lasting obligation upon, Sir,

Your very obliged, humble servant,

J. H... A.....*

[Treasury Chambers.]

Manuscripts and Printed Books with MS. Notes, in the possession of the Right Hon. H—l—y A—n, belonging to the Doctor.

Lot 1. *Cocker's Arithmetic*, a new edition, revised, corrected and amended by the Right Hon. the Doctor. N.B.—This is a most valuable article, and the MS. notes particularly desirable, as many errors are herein pointed out and corrected in the common rules of Arithmetic as now received.

Lot 2. The celebrated *Treatise on Lying*, by Fernandez Mendez Pinto: done into English by the Doctor, for the use of himself and family. With an original Essay, by the Translator, on the *Utility*, and a Proposal for the *Encouragement*, of *Prevarication*. This copy is, we believe, the only one in England, and is peculiarly valuable on account of the MS. notes in the handwriting of the Marine Department.

Lot 3. *The Art of Making War*, by the Doctor.

* J. Hiley Addington.

Lot 4. *Horæ Ingratæ*; or, Extracts of which no use could be made by the Doctor. Collected from the Speeches of Messrs. Pitt, Fox, Windham, Grenville, and Canning.

Lot 5. *Tales of my Grandmother*, as spoken by Brother Bragge.

Lot 6. *An Ode to Gratitude*, in Greek,* by the *late* Dr. Addington, addressed to the great Earl of Chatham, illustrated by MS. notes of the present Doctor, and his *confidential* friend, the ingenious proprietor of Steele's Lavender Water. This copy is in excellent preservation and as good as new: the notes are added at the end, and are somewhat stained with Red Port.

Lot 7. *Rabelais' Works*, in which the passage where the great Gargantua swallows a whole fleet, seems much thumbed and dog-eared. The only note which appears is in the form of a *quere* (in the handwriting of the Doctor), whether the fleet here mentioned was *manned* or not? and whether the Giant seemed much refreshed after his meal.

Lot 8. *An Essay on Magnanimity*, in the handwriting of the Doctor, bound up with the Report of the Trial of the Plymouth Tinman, in which the Doctor got a verdict with costs. . . . .

Lot 13. *A Bundle of Remonstrances* to the Powers upon the Continent, as good as new. A parcel of Manifestoes to ditto, never sent.

Lot 14. *A Map of the Island of Lampedusa*, with a Memoir attached, showing how, by *removing* the bar at the mouth of the Harbour, *building* a City, *compelling* inhabitants to live in it, and *moving* the whole Island *only* one degree to the North-West, it could be made a most valuable colony to Great Britain, and a complete equivalent for Malta.† . . . .

Lot 19. *The Use of the Pivot* made easy to the meanest capacity, together with the advantage of *wheeling backwards*, by General Maitland.‡ . . . .

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* Pitt's friends complained loudly of the ingratitude of Addington, who owed his elevation to the Speakership of the House of Commons, in 1789, to Pitt's favour. But Addington owed his Premiership to the favour of the King, and could hardly have been expected to hold it as a mere *locum tenens*, bound to resign whenever Pitt wished to resume office.

† The cession of Malta to the French (never carried out) was one of the provisions of the Treaty of Amiens which excited most dissatisfaction. Lampedusa is a rocky island, about seven miles long by one mile broad, situated to the south-east of Sicily, in lat. 35° 29′ N. and long. 12° 35′ E.

‡ Maitland had gone over to the Addington party.

Lot 22. That celebrated tragedy, *The Windsor Whisper*; *or, The Secret Slander*, as performed repeatedly, with the greatest success, by the E—l of L—h, Lord A—n, the Right Hon. H—y A—n, and others, *His Majesty's Servants*. . . . .

Lot 24. *Divers Parcels of Medicine*, Patent and others, wrapped up in the *different Treaties*, from the *Barrier Treaty* * to that of Amiens, inclusive, and *other waste paper*.

Lot 25. *A Scheme how to make twenty-four old women* in red cloaks, upon a hill, look like a regiment of soldiers, by Charles Yorke, Private in the Pimlico Volunteers . . . .

Lot 29. *A Collection of Songs and Glees*, in MS., containing, amongst others, "The Vicar of Bray," "How happy could I be with either!" "Turn, oh, turn, my love!" "We be three *poor* Ministers," "Have you any work for the Tinker?" "Shepherds, I have lost my place," etc., etc. composed, set to music, and sung by the Viscount C—tle—gh.

Lot 30. *Two Views of Shipping*, in aqua-tinta, in which by an ingenious optical deception, six ships are made to look like twelve. This very curious article derives its greatest value from its being the first effect of the kind, made by a native of the *Pellew Islands*."

A "Continuation of the Catalogue" appeared in 'The Oracle' for May the 8th.

Lot 1. A curious *Pestle and Mortar*, made out of the thigh-bone of a country gentleman, used by the Doctor for pounding simples. The race of this creature, as well as the Mammoth, is supposed to be extinct.

Lot 2. *A set of Sèvres China*, as good as new. This article is the property of Baron H—y,† and is, by permission, included in the sale.

Lot 3. A Scheme for *hermetically sealing the Enemy's Ports* by turning a Prime Minister, or other ponderous substance, into a mudbank.

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* The Barrier Treaty, which surrendered the Low Countries to the Emperor Charles the 6th, was concluded between England, Holland, and Austria in 1715.

† Lord Hawkesbury's conduct in accepting, when Ambassador to Paris, of a valuable set of Sèvres China from the First Consul, was severely censured.

Lot 4. *A Stock of Bows;* one of extraordinary length, belonging to the Doctor; and another, with two strings to it, the property of Lord Viscount C—tle—gh.* This last article is particularly useful in all families, and in much request for the Irish trades.

Lot 5. *A Stock-jobbing Machine*, complete, and in constant work; by which a Press Warrant may be converted into a Bank note, and a Cabinet secret into a Transfer of Bank Stock.

Lot 6. The figure of *Neptune with the Trident broken.* This statue is particularly recommended to the notice of the public; it is so constructed, as, when viewed in different lights, to appear to represent different personages: when seen in one, it represents the God of the Ocean, when in another an old Bumboat-woman.

Lot 7. *Two curious speaking figures or Automata*, in lead. They are so dressed as to represent two boatswains in His Majesty's Service; and they are so constructed as to answer any questions which may be put to them. Their language is admirably suited to the characters they are made to appear in, as all they say is mixed with the oaths, blasphemy, and vulgarity which usually proceed from the lips of the inferior officers on board the King's ships. These figures have just been new dressed, and their clothes fresh laced. But notwithstanding the expense to which they have put the proprietor, they will be sold cheap. The mechanism is supposed to be damaged; and it is doubted whether they will ever speak to any purpose again. As the pea-season is coming on, they are recommended to gardeners in the neighbourhood of the metropolis as excellent scarecrows. N.B.—To be viewed, till the day of sale, at the Admiralty office.

Lot 8. A new *System of Economy*, recommended to the particular attention of the country, by which it is made clearly manifest that, having no ships in our dockyards, and no stores in our warehouses, is the cheapest way of providing for the security, and adding to the defence of the country.

Lot 9. *Two curious contrivances for opening letters.* These were discovered, it is said, by Sir Sydney Smith, although report says the present proprietor and his assistants have long made use of them.

Lot 10. *An Assortment of thumbscrews* and instruments of torture to make refractory shipwrights work; together with an Essay on Shipbuilding, proving that ships on paper are cheaper than when built of oak." †

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* Unlike Canning, Castlereagh did not resign when Pitt resigned; but accepted office under Addington.

† Reprinted in 'The Spirit of the Public Journals, viii. 272.

Canning did not confine himself to these demonstrations in the public papers. He drew up, and obtained signatures to, a memorial for presentation to Addington, urging him to resign in favour of Mr. Pitt (November, 1802). His attacks in the House of Commons were incessant. He brought into play the clever pencil of Gillray, to whom he suggested the subject of some of his most effective caricatures. His animosity grew so fervent that he even assailed Pitt, whose opposition appeared to him much too gentle. Sir George Lewis remarks that his artillery of newspaper attacks, both in verse and prose, against the whole Addington tribe, with all their medical apparatus, must have fostered a feeling of perpetual bitterness against Pitt, because Canning lived with him on terms of the closest intimacy, and, by a serious remonstrance, the ex-Minister could undoubtedly have silenced him. On the whole, wit is, perhaps, an unfortunate endowment for a public man. It furnishes, unquestionably, a powerful weapon of attack; but the wounds it makes are apt to be permanent. And it would seem to be the policy of a public man to propitiate as many, and to anger as few, persons as possible. Many of the trials which clouded Canning's later life must be traced to the bitter hostilities he aroused by his frequent and incautious use of his powers of sarcasm and ridicule.

It is by no means certain that Pitt wholly approved of the vehement and unresting advocacy of his brilliant partisan. There are times when prudence inclines Achilles to linger in his tent; and when he has good reason to feel dissatisfied with the ardent warriors who

would recall him to a field where nothing is to be gained and much may be lost. A politician can commit no greater mistake than to pluck the fruit before it is ripe, to challenge an opportunity instead of waiting until it comes to him. Pitt saw more clearly than Canning did the obstacles that lay in the way of his resumption of power; while his correct taste was repelled by the want of decorum too often apparent in Canning's vehement attacks. Thus, while he was unwilling to discourage his friends by exhibiting too great a reluctance, he was not less unwilling to compromise himself by too rash and hasty an acceptance. He could not but be aware of the King's partiality for his mediocre Minister. He knew that he could not form a permanent administration without the assistance of Lord Grenville, who, nevertheless, would prove an almost impracticable colleague. And he felt, perhaps, as Lord Dalling suggests, the rapid inroads of that premature decay which afflicted him with the pains of old age while still in the prime of manhood. These considerations could not absolutely subdue his desire for that place and power to which he had for so many years been accustomed, but they were able to moderate and restrain it. They made him not indisposed to wait for a crisis when his services would be indispensable, and he might, therefore, command his own terms.

In our memoir of Pitt we have described the circumstances under which Addington resigned, and Pitt resumed office. In the new administration Canning served as Treasurer of the Navy. After a struggle of

some months, the great Minister succumbed to physical weakness and mental anxiety. His death was severely felt by Canning, who throughout his later life, never failed on fitting occasions to express the honour and esteem in which he held his memory. "To one man, while he lived," he said afterwards at Liverpool, "I was devoted with all my heart, and all my soul. Since the death of Mr. Pitt, I acknowledge no leader; my political allegiance lies buried in his grave." "I think," he said, "it may be affirmed of Mr. Pitt beyond the possibility of contradiction, that if ever there was a statesman in the world whose interests individually were founded on peace; if ever there was a statesman of whom it might be presumed that, in conducting his country into war, he was led by a sense of irresistible necessity, it must have been he whose fame, as well as power, rested upon the basis of the financial prosperity of his country." One of Mr. Canning's biographers sees a closer resemblance between him and Pitt, than between Pitt and any other English statesman. "In Canning," he says,* "the points of similarity were more graceful and refined; in Pitt, more original and vigorous. They both," he continues, "possessed that faculty called *genius*; but Pitt's genius was more practical and diffusive. He was nearer to the people, and understood them better. Canning had less sympathy with them, treated them rather *en prince*, and dealt with popular topics more rhetorically. Pitt could afford to do things out of the openness of his intellect, which Canning was obliged to approach

* Robert Bell, 'Life of Canning, pp. 201, 202.

dexterously. Pitt gave you the impression of a man who stood clearly on his purpose, and was too much in earnest to be conscious of any ambition beyond it. Canning always had the classical air about him of an orator who felt he was addressing posterity." These seem to us points of difference rather than of likeness; and, indeed, a resemblance between the two statesmen can be detected only by the eye of fancy. Canning's eloquence differed in tone and character from Pitt's; his genius was more versatile but less solid; his temperament was more sensitive, his disposition more impetuous. Again, while Pitt's strength as a statesman lay in his grasp of financial and commercial questions, Canning's consisted in his mastery of foreign affairs. Canning, as we have seen, had a complete command of the resources of wit and humour; Pitt's invective was laboured, and he was incapable of the point and terseness which make up an epigrammatic style. Pitt's personal influence was remarkable, and he swayed the House of Commons almost at his will. Canning never formed a party, and though he could move the House to admiration or astonishment, he never obtained any firm hold upon it. In two points alone the two statesmen approached each other; in their love of power, and in their advocacy of reactionary measures, while at heart they cherished the principles of liberalism.

On the death of Pitt, the King made an effort to continue his administration, and authorised Lord Hawkesbury, better known as, afterwards, the Earl of Liverpool, to take the lead. Lord Hawkesbury quickly declined the

task, but contrived to secure for himself the lucrative sinecure of the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. According to Mr. Horner, Pitt's remaining colleagues made an offer to the Marquis Wellesley, the ex-Governor-General of India; but he refused it immediately and distinctly.* Meantime the King sent for Lord Grenville (January 26th, 1806), and asked him his advice. He replied that his sentiments on the subject were already well known, and that a new ministry ought to be comprehensive. The King then requested him, without delay, to consult his friends, and draw up an arrangement. Grenville said it was his duty to mention to his Majesty that the person with whom he should consult upon this occasion was Mr. Fox. The King replied that he expected it to be so, and meant it to be so. Thus was formed the Grenville-Fox Ministry, which included the ablest men of the Whig and moderate Tory parties. Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne) was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Howick (afterwards Earl Grey), First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Spencer and Mr. Windham held the seals as Secretaries of State; Lord Sidmouth became Privy Seal; Erskine, Lord Chancellor; Lord Fitzwilliam, President of the Council; while, by an indefensible arrangement, Lord Ellenborough, the Lord Chief Justice, was admitted into the Cabinet. A more powerful combination has seldom occupied the Treasury Bench, and it really deserved the designation applied to it satirically of "All the Talents"; a designation which, when it was used by Canning, elicited from Fox the

* 'Life of Horner,' i. 356.

generous reproof, that they could not possibly arrogate such a description to themselves, when they saw *him* on the opposite side of the House.

Canning who, by virtue of his oratorical powers and acknowledged abilities, succeeded at once to the leadership of the Opposition, lost no time in harassing the Government; resorting to his favourite weapons, he inspired Gillray to caricature its members, while he assailed them with his satiric verse. A *jeu d'esprit*, entitled 'Elijah's Mantle,' was, perhaps, his most successful effort, and the reader may not be displeased to see it *in extenso*:—

ELIJAH'S MANTLE.*

"When by th' Almighty's dread command,
Elijah, call'd from Israel's land,
Rose in the sacred flame;
The mantle good Elisha caught,
And, with the prophet's spirit fraught,
Her sacred hope became.

In Pitt our Israel saw combined
The patriot's heart, the prophet's mind,
Elijah's spirit here;
Now, sad reverse! that spirit's reft,
No confidence, no hope is left,
For no Elisha's near.

Grenville! to aid the Treasury fame,
A portion of his mantle claim,
Pitt's gen'rous ardour feel;
'Bove sordid self resolve to soar,
Amidst Exchequer gold be poor,
Thy wealth, a nation's weal.

* Reprinted in 'The Spirit of the Public Journals,' x. 153.

Fox, if on thee some remnant fall,
The shred may to thy mind recall
Those hours of loud debate,
When thy unhallow'd lips oft prais'd
The 'glorious fabric' traitors rais'd
On Bourbon's fallen state.

Thy soul let Pitt's example fire,
With patriot zeal thy tongue inspire,
Spite of thy Gallic leaven;
And teach this in thy latest day,
His form of prayer (*if thou can't pray*),
'Oh! save my country, Heaven!'

Windham, if e'er thy sorrows flow
At private loss or public woe,
Thy rigid brow unbend;
Tears over Cæsar, Brutus shed,
His hatred warr'd not with the dead,
And Pitt was once *thy* friend.

Does envy bid thee not to mourn?
Hold then his mantle up to scorn;
His well-earn'd fame assail;
Of funeral honours rob his corse,
And, at his virtues, till thou'rt hoarse,
Like the Greek cynic * rail.

Illustrious Roscius of the State,†
New breech'd and harness'd for debate;
Thou wonder of thy age!
Petty or Betty ‡ art thou hight,
By Granta sent to strut thy night
On Stephen's bustling stage.

* Thersites.

† Lord Henry Petty had already gained a reputation for prudence and ability. This sneer at his youth (he was only 26) was ungenerous on the part of a politician who had himself entered public life at an early age.

‡ Henry Betty, the juvenile actor, was then astonishing London audiences as "the young Roscius."

Pitt's chequer'd robe 'tis thine to wear,
Take, of this mantle, too, a share:
'Twill aid thy ways and means;
And should fat Jack and his cabal
Cry, 'Rob us the Exchequer, Hal,'
'Twill charm away the fiends.

Sage Palinurus of the realm,*
By Vincent call'd to take the helm,
And play his proxy's part,
Dost thou or star or compass know?
Canst reef aloft, or steer below?
Hast conn'd the seaman's chart?

No! from Pitt's mantle tear a rag,
Enough to serve thee for a flag,
And hoist it on thy mast:
Beneath *that sign* (our prosp'rous star),
Shall future Nelsons rush to war,
And rival victories past.

Sidmouth! though low thy head is laid,
Which call'd thee from thy native shade,
And gave thee second birth;
Gave thee the sweets of pow'r and place,
The tufted robe and gilded mace,
And rear'd thy puny worth;

Think how his mantle wrapp'd thee round;
Is one of equal virtue found
Among thy new compeers?
Or can thy cloak of Amiens' stuff,
Once laugh'd to scorn by blue and buff,
Hide thee from Windham's jeers?

When faction threaten'd Britain's land,
Thy new-made friends, a desp'rate band,
Like Ahab stood reprov'd;
Pitt's powerful tongue their rage could check;
His counsel sav'd from general wreck
The Israel that he lov'd.

* Lord Howick.

Yes, honour'd shade! while near thy grave
The letter'd sage and chieftain brave
The votive marble claim;
O'er thy cold corse the public tear,
Congeal'd, a crystal shrine shall rear,
Unsullied as thy fame."

Canning's opposition to the Ministry, spirited as it was and able, reflects no credit upon him as a statesman. Their well conceived measures for popularising the army, by introducing periodical terms of service and abolishing the severities of compulsory enlistment, provoked his hostility. Though himself in favour of Catholic Emancipation, he allowed his followers to raise the abominable "No Popery" cry. He assailed Mr. Fox with unparliamentary bitterness for the failure of the negotiations with France; and especially condemned him for an action which right-minded men should surely praise, his informing Talleyrand of a plot for the assassination of the First Consul, which had been brought to his knowledge. His attacks upon Fox were, indeed, so ungenerous, so unfounded, and so pertinacious as to suggest some disagreeable conclusions; for Canning must have been well aware that the Whig leader's health was rapidly failing.

On the death of Mr. Fox, the King apparently continued his confidence to Lord Grenville, and bade him take his own time in forming a new administration. He probably thought that Grenville, to strengthen himself after so great a loss, would have recourse to the "King's friends," or to the Pittites. But the Minister preferred to confirm his alliance with the Whigs, and Fox's office was given to the heir of Fox's political patrimony,

Lord Howick. Mr. Grenville became First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Holland was appointed to the Privy Seal; and Lord Sidmouth succeeded Lord Fitzwilliam as President of the Council. For unexplained reasons,* Grenville dissolved Parliament, but the new elections did not increase the Ministerial majority.

The proceedings relating to the Princess Caroline of Wales involved the Grenville Government in considerable difficulty. It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that the Prince had separated from the Princess soon after their marriage, and had behaved towards her with a meanness and a brutality almost incredible on the part of the "first gentleman in Europe." She herself was a plain, good-humoured, clever, but vulgar woman; with abundant spirit and courage; with not a few excellent qualities, but absolutely deficient in moral refinement and dignity of manner. Her levity, if not criminal, was certainly suspicious; but the conduct of the Prince, in its utter baseness, made her a heroine in spite of herself, and blinded the nation to her faults and failings. It was not only that he made her the object of a continual persecution, but that by his frequent and flagrant violations of his marriage vows he had placed himself in no position to be her accuser. It was probably at his instigation, or dictated by his known wishes, that in 1806 Sir John and Lady Douglas, who lived next door to the Princess at Blackheath, made affidavits charging

* Lord Holland says,—"It originated, I suspect, in Lord Grenville's ignorance of the state of the House of Commons and his strong propensity at all times to make sure doubly sure."—'Memoirs of the Whig Party, ii. 92.

her with adultery, with pregnancy during her separation from her husband, and with concealment of the birth of a male child. These affidavits, by the advice of Lord Thurlow, were submitted to Lord Grenville, the Prince asking what he was to do. "I do not know, Sir," replied the Minister, "what your Royal Highness must do; but I do know what *I* must do. I must lay the whole business, Sir, before His Majesty without the smallest delay." The King expressed a wish to be guided entirely by his Ministers; and four Commissioners, namely, Lord Chancellor Erskine, Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, Lord Grenville, and Lord Spencer were appointed to investigate into the truth of the allegations; Sir Samuel Romilly, the Solicitor-General, acting as their legal adviser. Their report censured the Princess for unbecoming levity, but acquitted her of the main charges brought against her, and the Cabinet then advised the King to admit the Princess of Wales to his presence, but to convey to her, through the Lord Chancellor, a strong admonition to be more circumspect and discreet in her future behaviour.

Lord Holland thinks that the Opposition intended to make these proceedings a main ground of attack against the Ministry; but the Catholic question arose, and this offered to its leaders a more convenient pretext than the defence of an indiscreet woman, and "blackening an heir apparent on whose favour they might soon depend for office and power." When Fox assumed the reins of power in 1805, in reply to the inquiry, "Have you no difficulty respecting the Roman Catholic question?" he answered, "None at all; I am determined not to annoy my

Sovereign by bringing it forward." In our opinion Fox referred only to then existing circumstances, and did not mean to preclude himself from taking up the work at a proper opportunity. At all events, after Fox's death, Lords Grenville and Howick felt themselves unfettered; and in March, 1809, as a first instalment of the justice so long delayed, they introduced into the House of Commons a bill for enabling the King to confer military Commissions on any of his subjects, without distinction of religion; so that Roman Catholics might hold commissions in the army.* To this the King at first assented; but soon afterwards changed his mind. The Cabinet acquiesced, and resolved to withdraw the Bill; reserving to themselves the right, by a formal minute, (1) of avowing that they were in favour of the removal of Roman Catholic disabilities; and (2) of renewing that, or proposing any other measure connected with the subject, which they might deem advisable. On this minute being submitted to the King, his bigotry took the alarm, and he demanded from Grenville and Howick a promise, in writing, that they would not again propose to him a concession to the Catholics. Such an assurance they declined to give, and the resignation of their offices was immediately, and with evident pleasure, accepted (March 24th). The Ministers, in retiring, had, however, the satisfaction of obtaining the royal assent to their

* Sheridan said of the conduct of the Grenville Ministry, in reviving the Catholic question by its Bill "for securing to all his Majesty's subjects the privilege of serving in the Army and Navy," that "it not only ran its head against a wall, but actually built a wall for the purpose of running its head against it."

bill for the abolition of the slave trade.* With this noble act of humanity the names of Grenville and Howick must always be associated, though the principal merit belongs to the persevering enthusiasm of William Wilberforce.†

* Wilberforce writes in his Diary,—"I have indeed inexpressible reasons for thankfulness on the glorious result of that struggle which, with so many eminent fellow-labourers, I have so long maintained. I cannot account for the fervour which happily has taken the place of that fastidious well-bred lukewarmness which used to display itself on this subject, except by supposing it to be produced by that Almighty Power who can influence at will the judgment and affections of men,"—*Life*, p. 283.

† "As no agreement with the King was made by the Ministers, on their accession to office, respecting the Catholic question, they could not justly complain of his objection if it was confined to the present, and did not relate to prospective measures. They made, however, a large concession to his antipathy against the Catholics, in complying with his desire that their limited measure should be withheld; and having deferred so far to the King's prejudices, they could not reasonably expect to be exposed to the test which he now required them to subscribe, or to be arrested by the barrier which he now erected across their path. This was the second Administration which the King had turned out upon the Catholic Question. The same question was destined, many years afterwards, in the consequence of its final settlement, to be fatal to a third Ministry,"—Sir G. C. Lewis, 'British Administrations,' pp. 294, 295.

V.

THE sudden political *bouleversement* occasioned by the unconstitutional procedure of the King did not pass without Parliamentary observation. A resolution condemning the acceptance of pledges by Ministers, which would restrict them in their duty of advising the Crown, was moved in both Houses. In the Lords it was rejected by 171 to 90*; in the Commons, only by 258 against 226. The latter division, all things considered, was not unsatisfactory, and practically amounted to a vote of censure upon the King. It was followed up by a motion expressing deep regret at the late change of Ministry, but this was lost by larger numbers, 244 to 198.

A new administration was formed by the Duke of Portland, who had been Prime Minister in the Coalition Government, but was now incapable, and broken down by disease. Though he took the Treasury, the real chief was Spencer Perceval, who of late had risen to a foremost position in the House. Perceval, the second son of Lord Egmont, was born in 1762. He received a careful education; adopted the law as his profession; and by his energy and talent attained the leadership of the Midland Circuit, and the gown of a King's Counsel, when only in his 34th year. In 1796 he entered

* The division was really taken on a motion for the adjournment of the House; but, of course, the effect was the same.

Parliament. Addington made him his Solicitor-General in 1801, and Attorney-General in 1802. His efficiency in debate, as well as his "No-Popery" principles, led to his speedy promotion to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. He took also the management of the House of Commons. Lord Brougham describes him as a person of acute and quick, rather than of great faculties.* "As Attorney-general to Mr. Addington, and bearing almost the whole burthen of the unequal debate, while the forces of Fox, Pitt, and Windham combined to assail the meagre Treasury bench, his talents sparkled with peculiar brightness. His dexterity in any great or any personal conflict; his excellent language, always purely but unaffectedly English, nor ever chargeable with incorrect taste; his attention constantly awake; and his spirit ever dauntless, nay, rather rising with emergency, gained him very great reputation as a ready and a powerful debater." † He had a great deal of cool

* Brougham, 'Statesmen of George the 3rd's reign,' i. 324.

† Lord Holland ('Memoirs of the Whig Party,' ii. 214, 215) speaks of him as "without much genius, a spirited, ready, and forcible speaker. Affectionate, frank, and generous in private, dangerous and formidable in public, he united to the most vulgar prejudices and virulent enmities in religion and politics, courage, integrity, and abilities that fortunately very rarely accompany them. It is singular that his features, with the exception of a winning smile when he was pleased, so much resembled these of Robespierre, that the portraits of that bloody fanatic of democracy might pass for those of our English champion of monarchical and ecclesiastical establishments." "Perceval," says Wilberforce (*Life*, p. 327), "had the sweetest of all possible tempers, and was one of the most conscientious men I ever knew; the most instinctively obedient to the dictates of conscience, the least disposed to give pain to others, the most charitable and truly kind and generous creature I ever knew."

courage, much patience and perseverance, a capacity for mastering details, and his integrity was undoubted. In a second place he shone with some brilliance; his mistake was, consenting to be thrust into the first place. The King so highly appreciated his sublime intolerance that, to secure his services, and compensate him for giving up his practice as a barrister, he offered him the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster for life, if he would take the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. This, however, was too much for the patience of the Commons; and, by a majority of 93 (208 to 115), they voted an address to His Majesty, praying that neither the said office, nor any other not usually held for life, should be granted on such a condition. The King was compelled to yield, and intimated, on the 8th of April, that the office had been granted "only during royal pleasure."

An important member of the Ministry was Lord Eldon, the feeblest statesman who was ever a great lawyer. He declared, in a letter to a friend,* that the world would not have induced him to take the Great Seal again, had not the King's commands been of such a nature as to leave him no choice. The disinterested creature added that so "great and excellent a man" as the King, "for great as well as excellent he has now shown himself," should not want such assistance as he could render. The King "considers the struggle as for his throne; and he told me but yesterday, when I took the Seal, that he did so consider it; that he must be the Protestant King of a Protestant Country, or no King. He is remarkably

* Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 34.

well — firm as a lion — placid and quiet beyond example in any moment of his life." Happy the servant who owned such a master; happy the master who could command the conscience of such a servant!

Sydney Smith, in his 'Peter Plymley's Letters,' observes of Canning, somewhat bitterly:—"This political Killigrew, just before the breaking up of the last administration, was in actual treaty with them for a place; and if they had survived four-and-twenty hours longer, he would have been now declaiming against the cry of 'No Popery!' instead of inflaming it." The sarcasm is true to some extent. Grenville had opened negotiations with Canning, and by so doing had driven Lord Sidmouth from his Cabinet;* but they had not proceeded so far as acceptance or refusal. He now joined the Perceval Ministry as Foreign Secretary; a compromise of principle which cannot be defended. Though believing in the justice of the Catholic claims, he accepted a prominent office in a Ministry pledged to the teeth to resist them. Lord Malmesbury has a *piquant* sketch of the brilliant "adventurer," as he at this time appeared to not unfriendly critics:—"Canning spoke," he says, "as if the choice of Cabinet places was to be at his refusal, and declared with a threat that he never would sit in the same Cabinet with Addington. Canning possesses the peculiar talent of justifying ably and forcibly all he does, or wishes to be done, and that so rapidly and so eloquently that it is very difficult not to be carried away by what he says. He is unquestionably

* This is not to be wondered at, when the character of Canning's attacks upon him is remembered.

very clever, very essential to Government; but he is hardly yet a statesman, and his dangerous habit of quizzing (which he cannot restrain) would be most unpopular in any department which required pliancy, tact, or conciliatory behaviour. He is honourable and honest, with a dash of the Irishman, and all his plans and ideas of governing would partake of this; and might be as dangerous in practice as he makes them appear plausible by the eloquent way in which he expresses them. . . . Canning may be safely trusted, for, I repeat it, he is honourable and honest, and if Pitt had not forced him in his hot-house of partiality and *engouement* (for it amounted to that), but had left him to ripen gradually, and allowed him, in the early part of his political life, which began only eleven years ago, to experience some hardships, or even contradictions, his mind would have taken a better bend; but spoiled as he had been—feared and wanted as he finds himself—no place is now high enough for him; his ambition rises beyond this visible diurnal sphere, and I fear he may lose many real and cordial friends for uncertain political connections."

The new Cabinet also included Castlereagh, Lord Hawkesbury, Lord Camden, Lord Westmoreland, Lord Mulgrave, Lord Bathurst, and Mr. Dundas, the eldest son of Lord Melville, who was restored to his seat at the Privy Council, but did not hold office. They at once dissolved Parliament, going to the country with a "No Popery" cry, which proved as successful then as it always has done in liberal England. When the new Parliament met in June, a trial of strength took place be-

tween the "ins" and the "outs,"* which showed a majority for Ministers, in the Lords, of 93, and in the Commons, of 195. The Government, however, had no bed of roses to recline upon. If domestic difficulties were for awhile in abeyance, foreign politics supplied them with an abundant crop of embarrassments. The humiliation of Prussia, followed by the defeat of the Russian armies at Eylau and Friedland, had left England almost without an ally on the Continent; and the treaty of Tilsit, concluded between Napoleon and the Emperor Alexander, on the 7th July, 1807, menaced British interests with a formidable danger. Information was privately communicated to the Government of a secret article in the treaty, by which it was agreed that the French should take possession of the powerful Danish fleet, then lying at Copenhagen. Canning at once perceived that the junction of this fleet with the navies of France and Spain would form a combination of serious importance, and he knew that on the friendly feelings of Denmark no reliance could be placed. He therefore obtained the consent of his colleagues to a measure of extraordinary boldness and dubious justice. A powerful naval and military force was despatched to Copenhagen, accompanied by a demand for the surrender of the fleet, to be returned at the conclusion of a peace in as good a condition as when surrendered. The demand was refused; whereupon Copenhagen was bombarded, and the entire Danish navy

* The leadership of the Opposition was assumed by Mr. Ponsonby, ex-chancellor of Ireland, on the removal of Lord Howick to the Upper House on the death of his father, Earl Grey. On Ponsonby's death in 1817, Tierney succeeded him.

consisting of 18 sail of the line, 15 frigates, and 31 brigs and gun-boats, carried away. In the following session, which opened in January, 1808, the policy of this high-handed proceeding was disputed by the Opposition in both Houses; but it seems to have been generally approved in the country, and was affirmed, of course, by the Ministerial majority. The opinion of most moderate men was expressed by Wilberforce:—"After much reflection, I am convinced that, under all circumstances of the case, the Danish expedition was just. It was absolutely essential to deprive the Danes of a fleet which, combined with that of Russia, would otherwise have soon conveyed a French army to Ireland or Scotland, or have forced us to detach to the north so large a proportion of our naval strength as would have left us open to attack in the south and west of the two islands."

At the moment when Napoleon's supremacy in Europe appeared fully established, a small cloud arose on the western horizon, which, no bigger than a man's hand at first, was destined to expand into a destructive storm. His unresting ambition had determined on the inclusion of the Spanish peninsula within his vast but loosely built empire. In November, 1807, a French army occupied Lisbon, and the Portuguese royal family took refuge in Brazil. In March, 1808, Murat with a French force seized upon Madrid,—and three months later, Joseph Bonaparte was proclaimed King of Spain. But Napoleon had underrated the patriotic energies of the populations whose destinies he thus contemptuously disposed of. In both Spain and Portugal a general revolt took place;

and all over the country juntas were formed for the purpose of stimulating and guiding the insurrection. England sympathized strongly with this outbreak of patriotism. "I cannot but rejoice," wrote Horner,* "that a people who bear such a name as the Spaniards should make a struggle, at least, for their independence; the example cannot be otherwise than beneficial, even if they should entirely fail, to their posterity at some future day, and to all the rest of mankind. It is the most detestable of all the enormities into which Bonaparte's love of dominion has plunged him; and more completely devoid, than any other, of all pretence of provocation or security. If I were a Spaniard, I should consider resistance, however desperate in its chances of success, and however bloody in its immediate operation, an indispensable duty of discretion and expediency; to put the proposition in its most frigid form of expression." "What an extraordinary spectacle," writes Wilberforce, † "is now exhibiting in Spain! Surely Bonaparte would not have proceeded as he has done, if he had not been absolutely intoxicated by his prosperity . . . I have often thought that it might perhaps please God to pull down this giant when raised to his highest elevation, and apparently glorying the most reasonably, as well as most proudly, in his strength." To the popular sympathy the Government hastened to give active expression; and supplies of ammunition and money were forwarded to the insurgent juntas. In

* 'Life of Francis Horner,' i. 451, 452.

† *Life*, p. 293.

July, 1808, he despatched a military force to their assistance, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, who, by the victories of Roliça (August 17th) and Vimiera (August 21st), broke the spell of French invincibility, and forced Junot, the French general, to negotiate for the evacuation of Portugal. The convention of Cintra, concluded by Sir Hew Dalrymple, who, as senior officer, had superseded Wellesley, relieved Portugal from the French army; but its terms were considered too favourable, and it provoked an outburst of popular wrath.

Simultaneously with the Wellesley expedition to Portugal, an expedition to Spain, under Sir John Moore, had been designed; but owing to delays in the arrival of reinforcements, he did not enter Spain till some weeks after the Cintra Convention had been signed; and meanwhile Napoleon himself had taken the command of the French forces, scattered to the winds the Spanish armies, and entered Madrid in triumph. Moore was compelled to retreat; pursued by Soult and Ney, and at Corunna (January 16th, 1809), by a soldier's death and a signal victory, retrieved the errors of which, from a military point of view, he had undoubtedly been guilty. The failure of this expedition, and the Cintra Convention, were the subjects of angry debate when Parliament assembled in January. The Opposition displayed an unexpected amount of strength, and its attacks were as numerous as they were embarrassing; while it soon became evident that the Government was a house divided against itself. Canning had warmly dissented from a resolution to confirm the convention at which the Cabinet had arrived during

his absence, and he fretted at the incompetency of Castlereagh as War Secretary. The discord in the Cabinet was so great that it was only the King's support and influence which held it together. "Each of the Ministers," says a shrewd observer, "begins to extend the circle of his confidential communications, which are full of compaints of each other, and which announce, beyond all disguise, the bad opinion they entertain of their own permanence." Their majorities, however, remained unaffected; and the Opposition made no serious efforts to expel them from office, because convinced that, if successful, the Court would immediately intrigue to deprive them of the fruit of their success. "I am satisfied these people, or any people, may command under the King's influence a majority in Parliament; and it would have the appearance of a struggle for power, at a time when a man must indeed be of a most depraved ambition, to wish for the appearance and responsibility of governing the country, with the certainty that a Court intrigue would be incessantly at work, with ample means of depriving him of all power to be of real use." Clouds, nevertheless, were gathering thickly round the Ministry.

The first which broke concerned the Throne rather than the Treasury Bench. It was the charge which Colonel Wardle preferred against the Duke of York, the Commander-in-Chief, of being involved in the corrupt sale of commissions by the Duke's former mistress, a Mrs. Clarke. The Ministry acted with curious indecision in this wretched business. At first they allowed, or promoted, a public inquiry. Then, at the

King's instigation, they undertook the Duke's defence; and by a vigorous use of Court influence succeeded in carrying a resolution which exculpated him from any guilty knowledge of Mrs. Clarke's transactions. Public opinion went strongly against the Duke, and though it did not counteract, it certainly diminished the influence of the Court. The minority, therefore, was so large that the Duke felt himself compelled to resign his office; in which he was succeeded by Sir David Dundas. "The conduct of the House in general," writes Mr. Horner,* "has been much more patriotic, and the vote of the minority has been much more effective, than I expected at the outset of this important inquiry, that either would be found to be. The practical measure has been obtained; and it can neither be denied, nor fail to be attended with a benefical impression among all intelligent men, that this practical result had been accomplished by the united force of public opinion and of the respectable minority in the House. Had that minority been less, the Duke would not have resigned." Horner adds:—"The stories which are mentioned of the King's behaviour, under these distressing and embarrassing circumstances, are very natural, and likely to be true. The Duke of York went to Windsor after Wardle's original motion, and stated his case to the King; that is, stated the same lies to him which he has been repeating to the very last to his defenders in the House. The King said, the charge might be untrue, but the slur cast upon him would never be removed, and it

* 'Life of Francis Horner,' i. 485, 486.

was a greater injury to the family than they had ever suffered since they came to the Throne. The poor old man, who is too blind to read, makes the newspapers be read to him by three different persons, that nothing may be concealed from him."

The second cloud burst some months later, and was more serious in its consequences. To relieve Austria, which was pressed by Napoleon, in the summer of 1809, and finally, by the Battle of Wagram, reduced to a prostrate condition, the British Government, at the instigation (it is said) of the King, determined on sending a grand naval and military expedition to the Scheldt, with instructions to destroy the French naval arsenals at Antwerp and Flushing. Unfortunately, Lord Castlereagh permitted the appointment of a general of notorious feebleness and incompetency, the Earl of Chatham; and the expedition proved a disastrous failure. It accomplished not one of its objects; and after losing a considerable portion of his army, Chatham returned to England early in September, covered with disgrace. He left a detachment in the island of Walcheren, which, however, on account of its pestilential climate, was abandoned before the end of the year. The calamity was so great in itself, and in its consequences, that the nation was moved with a paroxysm of anger, shame, and sorrow. It called forth a flood of caricatures, epigrams, and pasquinades. One of these is well known:—

> "Great Chatham's son, with his sword drawn,
> Was waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;
> And Strachan, as eager to get at 'em,
> Was waiting for the Earl of Chatham."

Sir Richard Strachan was in command of the fleet. Less generally known is the following:—

"*Friend.* When sent fresh wreaths on Flushing's shores to reap,
What didst thou do, illustrious Chatham?
Chatham. Sleep!
Friend. To men fatigued with war repose is sweet,
But when awake, didst thou do nothing?
Chatham. Eat!"

Canning, who for some time had exercised a paramount influence in the Cabinet, and had long complained of the inefficiency of Castlereagh, now resolved on his dismissal. As early as April he had communicated his views to the Duke of Portland, suggesting that Lord Wellesley should be substituted for Lord Castlereagh as War Minister; and under a threat of resignation, he obtained a promise to this effect from the Duke and the King. The latter instructed Lord Camden, who was connected with Lord Castlereagh by marriage, to inform him of the new arrangement proposed for the War Department; but Lord Camden contrived to delay the fulfilment of a mission which he doubtlessly felt to be unpleasant.* The failure of the Scheldt expedition led Canning to require of the Duke of Portland the immediate conclusion of the bargain between them; but the Duke informed him that no communication had been made to Castlereagh, and that he himself, broken down by his infirmities, was on the point of retiring. For some time it had been evident that the Duke was unfit to rule a Ministry; and Canning now aspired to be his

* It should be stated that the Duke had restricted him from informing Lord Castlereagh until the 28th of June.

successor. Accordingly he intimated to Perceval that the Prime Minister ought to be in the House of Commons, thus limiting the choice to Perceval and himself; and he added that "he could not think of Perceval's being Minister," thus inferring that he himself must be the new Premier.* He appears to have intended for Perceval the Lord Chancellorship. The "high Tories" of the Government were not disposed, however, to acquiesce in Canning's elevation, and he thereupon resigned (September 9th). Lord Camden then found himself compelled to acquaint Lord Castlereagh with the change in his department that had been in contemplation; and Castlereagh, considering that his colleagues had behaved unfairly towards him, followed Canning's example (September 9th).† Two days afterwards, accusing Canning of dishonourable conduct in concealing the promise

* Phipps, 'Memoir of Mr. Plumer Ward,' i. 229.

† "Lord Castlereagh joined to great boldness in action, great calm and courtesy of manner, long habits of business, and a considerable acquaintance with men collectively and individually. He lived in the world, and was essentially a man of the world; but, on the other hand, he was singularly deficient in literary accomplishments, and also in that concentration of purpose which forms a policy and gives daily consistency and vigour to general plans. His language—ungrammatical, diffuse, and mingling every variety of metaphorical expression—was the ridicule of the scholar; but the great air with which he rose from the Treasury Bench, threw back his blue coat, and showed his broad chest and white waistcoat, looking defiance on the ranks of the Opposition, won him the hearts of the rank and file of the Government adherents. In affairs, he got through the details of office so as to satisfy the scrupulousness of journalists, but did not put his heart and soul into those details, so as to give them an universal vitality. It was difficult to detect any particular error in his conduct, but the general result was unsatisfactory."—Lord Dalling, 'Historical Characters,' ii. 260, 261.

he had obtained for his removal, and continuing to act with him in the Cabinet, Castlereagh wrote to him, demanding satisfaction (September 19th); a demand which met with prompt compliance. The parties met on Putney Heath on the 21st; Castlereagh attended by Lord Yarmouth, and Canning by Charles Ellis. Two shots were exchanged; and at the second fire Canning received his adversary's ball in the thigh; while Lord Castlereagh had a button shot off the right lapel of his coat. Canning afterwards proved that the concealment which had led to this foolish occurrence, far from being desired by himself, had been maintained in opposition to his remonstrances. Yet, on the whole, there seems good reason to censure the conduct of all concerned in the ministerial imbroglio; for Canning, when he saw the reluctance of his colleagues to make to Castlereagh a communication which was certainly due to him, should have undertaken the task himself, and the Duke and Lord Camden cannot be acquitted of a secrecy which was unfair, and a timidity which was ridiculous.

After a career, by no means very glorious, of two years and a half, the Portland Administration fell to pieces through these internal divisions. Perceval was now authorised by the King, though not without considerable reluctance, to open negotiations for a government on a new and comprehensive basis with Lords Grenville and Grey. But his overtures were at once declined, neither nobleman being willing to sacrifice consistency for office, or to form part of a Ministry which refused to relieve the Catholics from the disabilities under which they unjustly laboured. A similar fate

attended Perceval's applications to Lord Sidmouth's friends, though their ground of refusal was different; and finally, he was forced to reconstruct the old edifice as best he could, filling up the gaps with such materials as he had at hand. He himself became First Lord of the Treasury, "doubling" the office with that of Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Wellesley succeeded Canning; Hawkesbury was removed from the Home to the War Department; and Mr. Richard Ryder took his place. The administrative efficiency of a Government thus composed could be considered only as respectable; in debating power it was deplorably weak.

At the outset, however, it received the support of Canning, who was on terms of intimacy with Lord Wellesley, and agreed with him in thinking that the struggle against Napoleon could best be waged in the Spanish Peninsula. When the Whig Opposition objected to a vote of credit for three millions, introduced by Perceval in June, 1810, Canning spoke strongly in its favour, and urged the House to persevere in the contest it had undertaken. "We have seen," he said, "the Spanish armies beaten down, their towns taken and razed, yet have not these calamities broken the spirits of the Spanish nation. From the ashes of their slaughtered countrymen, and from the smoking ruins of their cities and their hamlets, has burst forth a remounted flame, kindling anew that ardour and enthusiasm which misfortune may, for a time, smother and overwhelm, but has not power to extinguish. A people so animated and so resolute may be exterminated, but they cannot be subdued; from each disaster that befals them they

derive new energies as they do fresh motives for resistance. Immediate and decisive success was not to be expected in such a contest; but to have so long protracted the struggle against such an enemy, and with all the disadvantages under which they were forced into it, affords indisputable proof of qualifications in the Spaniards which demand our admiration and esteem; of a patriotism, a zeal, and a perseverance of which no people in Europe has hitherto afforded an example." Replying to the charge that the victory of Talavera, won by Wellington in the previous campaign, was "a barren victory," he said:—"Barren undoubtedly it was, if victory has no fruits but districts overrun, fortresses taken, extent of territory acquired; yet not barren, but fruitful—not unproductive, but as advantageous as brilliant, if we take into account that it immediately opened to us the gates of Cadiz, and that it will hereafter open to us the ports of Spanish America—advantages which far outweigh the ordinary military results of a victory. But even were the effects of all our exertions confined to prolonging the struggle against France in European Spain, so thoroughly am I convinced of the policy of supporting that struggle to the last extremity, that were the question, at this moment, a new and undecided question,—were our armies and our fleets hitherto not engaged, nor our faith pledged to the cause, I should be of opinion that it would be our duty, no less than our interest, even *now*, to begin our efforts in aid of the Peninsula, if now for the first time we were called upon to begin them."

At the end of the year, the King was once more

afflicted with a return of the mental disease which haunted him, more or less, throughout his life. This time it was induced by his regret at the failure of the Walcheren expedition, and his grief for the death of his favourite daughter, the Princess Amelia. A Regency Bill became necessary; but it did not provoke the fierce debates which had attended the introduction of a similar measure in the days of Pitt and Fox. On the assumption of the Regency by the Prince of Wales, he made none of those changes in the Government which had been anticipated from his previous profession of political faith. On the contrary he broke before long with his old friends, the Whigs, and flung himself into the arms of a rabid Toryism. It cannot be believed that he was at any time sincere in his adhesion to the principles of Liberalism. They were antagonistic to his very nature, which was selfish and arbitrary to the core. But it had secured for him a certain amount of popularity, and answered his purpose for many years.

An attempt had previously been made by Lord Wellesley to recall to the Cabinet Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh, and Mr. Canning; but both Castlereagh and Sidmouth refused to take office with the latter, and Perceval did not consider the accession of Canning alone desirable. Afterwards, Perceval made offers to Sidmouth and Castlereagh, but Lord Wellesley objected to any re-organization of the Cabinet which omitted Canning. The relations between Wellesley and the Premier grew more and more constrained. The former's impetuous spirit and ambitious intellect chafed at the narrow, dilatory, hesitating policy of the latter. He

complained that he starved the war in the Peninsula. He urged upon him the propriety of making concessions to the Roman Catholics. There was scarcely a subject on which they did not disagree, and nobody was surprised when, in January, 1811, Lord Wellesley abruptly threw up the seals of the Foreign Office. To compensate for this defection, Perceval, with the Prince Regent's approval, began to look towards the Whigs for support. At this time the Prince took a very curious step. He addressed a letter (February 13th*) to his brother, the Duke of York, in which, after stating that his sense of filial duty had been his sole motive for retaining his father's Ministers, he reviewed the recent successes of the British army in the Peninsula, and declared his resolution to persevere in the present system. "I cannot withhold my approbation," he continued, "from those who have honourably distinguished themselves in support of it. I have no predilections to indulge, no resentments to gratify, no objects to attain but such as are common to the whole empire . . . Having made this communication of my sentiments in this new and extraordinary crisis of our affairs, I cannot conclude without expressing the gratification I should feel if some of those persons with whom the early habits of my public life were formed, would strengthen my hands and constitute a part of my Government . . . With such support, and aided by a vigorous and united Administration, formed

* It is given *in extenso* in the Duke of Buckingham's 'Memoirs of the Court of England during the Regency,' i. 257.

on the most liberal basis, I shall look with additional confidence to a prosperous issue of the most arduous contest in which Great Britain was ever engaged." And he concluded by authorising the Duke of York to communicate the letter to Lord Grey, who, in turn, was to show it to Lord Grenville.*

* The letter gave much offence to the Whigs, and was wittily parodied by Thomas Moore in one of his happiest satires,—which opens thus:—

"At length, dearest Freddy, the moment is nigh
When, with P-ce-v-l's leave, I may throw my chains by;
And as time now is precious, the first thing I do,
Is to sit down and write a wise letter to you."

It continues:—

"I need not remind you how cursedly bad
Our affairs were all looking when father went mad;
A strait-waiscoat on him and restrictions on me,
A more *limited* Monarchy could not well be.
I was called upon then in that moment of puzzle,
To choose my own minister,—just as they muzzle
A playful young bear, and then mock his disaster
By bidding him choose out his own dancing-master.
I thought the best way, as a dutiful son,
Was to do as old Royalty's self would have done...
I am proud to declare I have no predilections,
My heart is a sieve, where some scatter'd affections
Are just danced about for a moment or two,
And the *finer* they are, the more sure to run through...
By-the-by, ere I close this magnificent letter,
(No man except Pole would have writ you a better),
'Twould please me if those whom I've humbugg'd so long
With the notion (good men!) that I know right from wrong,
Would a few of them join me—mind only a few—
To let too much light in on me never would do;
But even Grey's brightness sha'n't make me afraid,
While I've Camden and Eldon to fly to for shade...

The Whig leaders necessarily understood it as conveying, not an authority to form a new Government but a proposal to join the present, with some modifications. They believed also that the communication of it to Lord Grey in the first place, instead of to Lord Grenville, who led the Opposition in the Lords, was designed to create a misunderstanding between them. They agreed, therefore, to decline the offer; intimating that their decision was based on public and not personal grounds, and that their differences of opinion from the existing Administration were "too many and too important" to admit of any union. They added an expression of their conviction that in Ireland was needed "a total change of the present system of government," and that the public welfare demanded an immediate repeal of the Catholic disabilities. On receiving this answer, which, it is to be presumed, the Prince fully expected, he informed Perceval that he was to continue Minister. Lord Castlereagh then succeeded Wellesley as Foreign Secretary.

The Ministry formed after so much labour was destined to a very brief existence. On the 11th of May, its head, Mr. Perceval, was shot by a madman named Bellingham, in the lobby of the House of Commons. Some reconstruction was rendered neces-

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So, in short, if they wish to have places, they may,
And I'll thank you to tell all these matters to Grey,
Who, I doubt not, will write (as there's no time to lose)
By the twopenny post to tell Grenville the news."

See also the poem, 'King Crack and his Idols.'

sary by this deplorable event. Lord Liverpool,* assuming the lead, applied to Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning to join him; but met with a refusal from both; from the former, on the ground of the hostile attitude of the Ministry on the Catholic question, and its want of vigour in prosecuting the war in Spain; from the latter on the Catholic question alone. Any intention Lord Liverpool might have entertained of going on with the Cabinet as it was, fell before a motion carried by 174 votes to 170, for an Address to the Regent, imploring him to form a strong and efficient Administration. Lord Wellesley was then called in by the Prince, but he could obtain no assistance from Lords Grey and Grenville, who were determined not to support an anti-reform policy.† A similar failure attended the efforts of Lord Moira; and Lord Liverpool then resumed office as First Lord of the Treasury, with Lord Sidmouth in the Home Office, and Mr. Vansittart (afterwards Lord Bexley) as Chancellor of the Exchequer :—

> "One Mr. V-ns-tt-t, a good sort of person,
> Who's also employed for this season to play
> In 'Raising the Wind' and 'The Devil to Pay.'"

* Mr. Crabb Robinson (*Diary*, iii. 37) relates an amusing anecdote of Lord Liverpool. "When young, he was the butt of his companions. At Christ's College, Cambridge, there being a party at some gownsman's (I believe, Canning), he broke in, 'I am come to take tea with you!'—'No, you are going to the pump!' And the threat was carried out."

† Mr. Horner characterises the issue of these ministerial intrigues as "the triumph of inveterate duplicity, and the low arts of a palace, over an inflexible and proud integrity."—*Life*, ii. 111.

Lord Liverpool earnestly endeavoured to secure the co-operation of Mr. Canning :—

> "We expect, too—at least we've been plotting and planning—
> To get that great actor from Liverpool, C-nn-g."*

He offered him the Foreign Office, but Canning rejected it, because Castlereagh was to lead the House of Commons. "How striking," remarks Wilberforce, "is Canning's example! Had he fairly joined Perceval on the Duke of Portland's death, as Perceval offered, he would now have been the acknowledged head, and supported as such. But his ambitious policy threw him out, and he sunk infinitely in public estimation, and has since with difficulty kept buoyant." Canning, in a letter to Wilberforce, endeavoured to justify himself: — "When I found," he wrote, "that the determination was to keep the substantial management of the House of Commons in the hands of Lord Castlereagh, I was no longer anxious to save appearances. I had wished to provide for the public good, not for personal feeling. Many people say, and you seem inclined to adopt their reasoning, 'The lead after all is merely a feather, what signifies it in whose hands it is?' Others say, 'Why not let Lord C. have it nominally? It will in effect devolve upon yourself.' Such has been the language of the Regent, and such that of many other well-meaning common friends. Now, to the first of these arguments, I answer that it is founded in a mistake. To the second, that it is (unintentionally, no doubt) a suggestion of dishonesty.'

* Moore, Poetical Works: 'Occasional Addresses.'

The Liverpool Ministry went on its way, and assisted by the repeated lustre of Wellington's victories in the Peninsula, succeeded in repelling every attack. As Sir George Lewis observes, the same events tended to discredit the Whigs, who had invariably opposed the Spanish war. As a party they were rendered unpopular by this opposition at the return of peace; in the same manner, though not to the same extent, that, twenty years earlier, they had incurred unpopularity by the opinions of their leaders on the French Revolution. To such men as Grey and Grenville, however, their unpopularity mattered little, so long as they had the consciousness of having faithfully adhered to the great principles and traditions of their party.

Canning took his seat for Liverpool in the Parliament which met in the autumn of 1812. His influence in the House of Commons gradually declined, and, in 1813, seeing little chance of a return to office, he formally disbanded his little group of adherents.* In the autumn of 1814 he resolved, on account of the feeble health of his eldest son, to pass the winter at Lisbon. Lord Liverpool then, after consultation with Lord Castlereagh, offered him the post of Ambassador

* "A singular political event," writes Horner, on the 22nd of July, 1813, "and one not very intelligible, was announced last night, that Canning has formally, and with some solemnity, disbanded his party; telling the gentlemen who have been his supporters during the session, that they may, for the future, consider themselves as unengaged; and that he is no longer to be regarded as their head. Ward says they are all turned adrift upon the wide world, but as he has stayed a year in his place, he thinks himself entitled to a good character from his master." —*Memoirs*, ii. 135, 136.

at Lisbon, which he accepted. Thus, after refusing to serve *with* Castlereagh in the distinguished and influential position of Foreign Secretary, he now consented to serve *under* him in a diplomatic office of the second class. Some years afterwards he confessed to one of his friends that his acceptance of the Lisbon embassy was a great political mistake: "In all probability," he said, "I should have had the most influential post in the Government in the House of Commons long before, had I not fallen into that error. I laboured hard to avoid accepting the appointment, but it was so urged upon me by the King's Government that I thought I had not the moral right, as a public man, to refuse it." But from his own point of view, his rejection of the Foreign Secretaryship was an infinitely greater mistake. Had he accepted it he would have shared in the glory which attended the triumphant issue of the Peninsular war, and the overthrow of Napoleon; and it cannot be doubted but that his superior oratorical ability and administrative capacity would soon have secured him the leadership in the Commons. As it was he threw away one of the most splendid political opportunities ever offered to an ambitious statesman, and in so doing furnished the moralist with a text for commenting on the folly of allowing personal feelings to enter at all into the great game of politics.

It is necessary here to refer to two questions on which Mr. Canning's action was of a nature to influence largely his career as a politician.

In 1812, in conjunction with Lord Wellesley in the House of Lords, he introduced a motion pledging the House "early in the next session of Parliament, to take into consideration the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, with a view to a final and conciliatory adjustment." It was supported by Lord Castlereagh, and carried by 235 to 106 votes; the largest majority in favour of religious liberation obtained during Mr. Canning's life, and due, no doubt, to a secret fear on the part of many, that Napoleon might take advantage of the rebellious feeling in Ireland, to land there an army of liberation. In the following year, Canning supported Grattan's Roman Catholic Relief Bill; but was careful to introduce into it provisions which might secure the throne to a Protestant Sovereign, and provide for the maintenance of the Established Church. The Bill was read a first and second time by considerable majorities; but when the Bill was in Committee, the Speaker (Abbot) moved the omission of the words, "to sit and vote in either House of Parliament," and carried his motion by a majority of four (251 against 247). Mr. Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, then announced the abandonment of the Bill. The Speaker's unusual procedure was severely satirized by Moore:—

"There was a little Man, and he had a little Soul,
And he said, 'Little Soul, let us try, try, try,
Whether it's within our reach
To make up a little speech,
Just between little you and little I, I, I,
Just between little you and little I!"

"The little Man then spoke,
'Little Soul, it is no joke,
For as sure as Jacky Fuller loves a sup, sup, sup,
I will tell the Prince and people
What I think of Church and steeple,
And my little patent plan to prop them up, up, up,
And my little patent plan to prop them up."

"Away then, cheek by jowl,
Little Man and little Soul
Went and spoke their little speech to a tittle, tittle, tittle,
And the world all declare,
That this priggish little pair
Never yet in all their lives look'd so little, little, little,
Never yet in all their lives look'd so little!"

If the line Canning took on the Catholic Question placed an obstacle in the way of his return to power, he created for himself a more serious difficulty by his course, generous and high-minded as it was, in reference to the disputes between the Regent and the Princess of Wales. We have already referred to the charges of immorality brought against her in 1806, and the acquittal which she obtained at the hands of the four commissioners specially appointed to inquire into their truth. As she was admitted to Court and allowed the custody of her daughter, peace prevailed for some years. This, however, was disturbed by the Regency, which enabled the Prince to recover his child, and to limit her intercourse with her mother, in accordance with his feelings of hatred and disgust. The advisers of the Princess, chief of whom was Mr. Brougham, already distinguished by his versatile abilities and powerful oratory, recommended her, in these circumstances, to appeal to the public. She accordingly addressed a

letter to the Prince, in January 1813, complaining of the restrictions placed upon her intercourse with the Princess Charlotte, of the imputations upon her character which these restrictions implied, of the unwise seclusion of the Princess Charlotte from the world, and of the improper delay which had taken place in presenting her for the rite of confirmation. This letter, sent to Lords Liverpool and Eldon, was twice returned unopened. At length, the Ministers intimated that it had been read to the Prince, but that he had given no instructions with reference to it. Immediately it made its appearance in the columns of the 'Morning Chronicle,' eliciting a strong expression of public indignation. The Prince found himself compelled to take some action in the matter; and proceeded to refer the letter, with all the documents relating to the inquiry in 1806, to twenty-three Privy Councillors (the Cabinet Ministers, the Archbishops of Canterbury, York, and Armagh, the Bishop of London, and the principal judges), who reported that, in their opinion, the obnoxious restrictions ought not to be removed. Their decision drew from the Princess a letter to the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker protesting against its injustice, throwing herself upon the wisdom and justice of Parliament, and demanding to be treated as innocent until she had been proved guilty. A debate thereupon arose in the House of Commons, in which some strong allusions were made to the Prince's conduct. Among others, Mr. Stuart Wortley (afterwards Lord Wharncliffe) said:—"He had as high notions of royalty as any man, but he must say that all such proceedings

contributed to pull it down. He was very sorry that we had a royal family who did not take warning from what was said and thought concerning them. They seemed to be the only persons in the country who were wholly regardless of their own welfare and respectability. He would not have the Prince Regent lay the flattering unction to his soul, and think his conduct would bear him harmless through all these transactions. He said this with no disrespect to him or his family; no man was more attached to the House of Hanover than he was; but had he a sister in the same situation with Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, he would say that she was exceedingly ill-treated." * Sir Samuel Romilly, in like manner, used language of a boldness and a candour which would scarcely now be ventured in the House of Commons. Canning refrained from taking a prominent part in the debate; but he disapproved of the Prince Regent's proceedings, and we shall soon see that this disapproval militated against his official advancement.

With the settlement of Europe, effected by the Treaties of Vienna, Mr. Canning had no concern. We can hardly believe that, had he occupied Castlereagh's place, he would have agreed to a settlement so favourable to the interests of despotism, or that he would have made concessions so hostile to the interests of Great Britain. He held, however, that as it was accepted by England,

* "What a hint to the Royal Family is conveyed by Wortley's speech; it is like some of the signs that appeared among the Tories, after the trial of the [seven] Bishops."—F. HORNER, 'Memoirs,' ii. 130.

British statesmen had no other course but to carry it out in all its integrity; though by so doing they trampled under foot the principles for which they had formerly contended, and upon which the British constitution, and the happiness and security of the British people, were immutably founded.

He returned from Lisbon* in the early part of 1816;† and soon afterwards accepted from Lord Liverpool, the office of President of the Board of Control, on the understanding that the Catholic question should be regarded as an "open" one. This appointment necessitated his re-election for Liverpool, which was not effected without a partial contest. In his speech on the 12th of June, thanking his constituents for their renewal of confidence, he replied to the charge brought against him, that he was about to act in public life with men from whom he had occasionally differed in opinion. It was, he said, substantially unfounded. "It is unfounded," he continued,‡ "because though, on particular questions, I may have differed from many of my present colleagues (as what two men may not occasionally differ, if each has an opinion of his own?) yet, upon all the great outlines of our political system, and upon every main principle affecting the foreign policy of England, our opinions

* He went there as Ambassador to receive the Prince Regent of Portugal on his expected return from Brazil; but resigned when he learned that the Prince Regent did not intend to return to his European dominions.

† In the session of 1816, Lord Grenville separated from Lord Grey, and retired from active political life.

‡ Speeches of the Right Hon. G. Canning, (ed. 1825), pp. 151, 152, 155, 156.

have generally concurred. Those opinions I have, to the best of my power, supported, in whatever hands the Government of the country has been placed. I have supported them not less strenuously when myself out of office, than when I formed a part of the administration."

To the reproach that he was an adventurer, which, in a certain but not dishonourable sense, we have shown to be true enough, he replied:—"To this charge, as I understand it, I am willing to plead guilty. A representative of the people, I am one of the people; and I present myself to those who choose me only with the claims of character (be they what they may), unaccredited by patrician patronage or party recommendation. Nor is it in this free country, where, in any walk of life, the road of honourable success is open to every individual—I am sure it is not in this place—that I shall be expected to apologise for so presenting myself to your choice. I know there is a political creed which assigns to a certain combination of great families a right to dictate to the sovereign and to influence the people; and that this doctrine of hereditary aptitude for administration is, singularly enough, most prevalent among those who find nothing more laughable than the principle of legitimacy in the Crown. To this theory I have never subscribed. If to depend directly upon the people, as their representative in Parliament; if, as a servant of the Crown, to lean on no other support than that of public confidence,—if that be to be an adventurer, I plead guilty to the charge, and I would not exchange that situation, to whatever taunts it may expose me, for all

the advantages which might be derived from an ancestry of a hundred generations."

Canning, in the Liverpool Ministry, was called upon to sanction and defend a rigorous and arbitrary legislation which recalled the repressive measures of Pitt's "Reign of Terror." Much distress prevailed in the country, the necessary consequence of the reaction after the protracted war excitement; and this distress was greatly aggravated by a cold wet summer, and a deplorably deficient harvest. Discontent was the "natural concomitant" of distress in days when the people had but a limited share in the Government. "Instead of meeting this state of things," says Sir George Lewis, "by a liberal and enlightened commercial policy, as recommended by Lord Grenville and other members of the Opposition, the Ministers resorted to restriction of trade for the relief of distress, and to coercion for the suppression of discontent."* The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. In both Houses secret committees were appointed to inquire into dangerous meetings and associations. An army of spies and informers was let loose upon the public. Lord Sidmouth addressed a circular letter to the lord lieutenants of the shires advising them that pamphlets and writings which they considered "blasphemous and seditious" might be summarily suppressed, and their publishers apprehended on the warrant of a justice of the peace.† It is painful

* Before the end of the year the price of wheat had risen to 103*s.* a quarter. In the previous year the Government had actually proposed and carried a corn law which prohibited the importation of foreign wheat when the average price was under 80*s.* a quarter.

† The legality of this circular was disputed by Earl Grey in the Lords, and by Sir Samuel Romilly in the Commons.

to know that of all these measures Canning approved; that to every concession of popular rights he was strenuously opposed. In his speech at Liverpool, in 1818, he said:—"We live in awful times, and when principles are abroad, the indulgence of which, the fostering of which, the countenancing of which, the not resisting which strongly and determinedly, would hazard the existence of the happy establishment under which we live. With these principles I have never held communion, and will never compromise." Again, glorying in his enmity to parliamentary reform, he exclaimed:—"Unlimited extension of the right of suffrage would dissipate and exhaust its virtue: as the circle that spreads from the stone cast into the water extends itself till it embraces the whole surface of the part, and is lost in its own diffusion." And with a knowledge of the repressive measures he had assisted to pass, he could still assert that "the fair, practical exercise of the British Constitution allows the fullest scope for the expansion of every liberal sentiment, for the ebullition of every popular feeling, for the conflicting diversity of public principles, and even of personal partialities: it allows fair scope for all these, within a boundary which is not to be overleaped; but within which the most swelling enthusiasm may find room to exert and to exhaust itself." William Hone,* however, when arrested for the publication of certain political squibs, in which he had parodied the language of the 'Common Prayer-Book,' must have thought the "boundary" disagreeably narrow! It is true that on

* Hone (1779–1842) is well known as the ingenious author of the 'Every-day-Book,' the 'Table-Book,' and the 'Year-Book.'

each occasion he obtained a verdict of acquittal, in spite of the adverse ruling of the judges*; but this was scarcely an illustration of the scope allowed to "the most swelling enthusiasm."

The year 1819 was one of severe trial, and brought to a climax the long struggle between the people and the Ministry.† Distress still prevailed among the agricultural and manufacturing classes, who assembled in great and tumultuous meetings at Glasgow, Leeds, Carlisle, Stockport, and in London, to "ventilate" their grievances, and discuss the miseries of their position. At such a time there are always found some men of fluent speech and ready intellect to take the lead, and direct into channels of their own devising the vague, incoherent feelings and undefined sentiments of the multitude. This was now the case; and a cry was speedily raised for "annual parliaments" and "universal suffrage." The language used by the popular leaders was extravagant enough, but it was not treasonable; and the gatherings, noisy and disorderly as they were, had in them no ele-

* "Too poor to seek professional aid, he defended himself in person. But he was a man of genius in his way; and with singular ingenuity and persistence, and much quaint learning, he proved himself more than a match for the Attorney-General and the Bench. In vain did Lord Ellenborough, uniting the authority of the judge with the arts of a counsel, strive for a conviction. Addressing the jury,—'Under the authority of the Libel Act, and still more in obedience to his conscience and his God, he pronounced this to be a most impious and profane libel.' But the jury were proof alike against his authority and his persuasion. The humble bookseller fairly overcame the awful chief justice, and was thrice acquitted."—Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History,' ii. 191, 192.

† The Duke of Wellington joined the Cabinet this year as Master-General of the Ordnance.

ment of real danger. The Administration, however, on the 30th of July, thought proper to issue a proclamation against seditious meetings; and thus to excite alarm amongst the landed gentry, and create a wide-spread feeling of indignation amongst the lower orders. Manchester, following an example already set by Birmingham, resolved to meet on the 9th of August, and elect a kind of "extra parliamentary" representative,—termed a "legislatorial attorney" in the parlance of the day. This meeting was prohibited as illegal by the magistrates; and the "Radicals" (it was now that this designation came into vogue) then determined to hold one on the 16th to petition for Parliamentary Reform. Accordingly, on the 16th, an immense multitude, variously estimated at 20,000, 40,000, and 60,000 men, with two bands of Female Reformers, marched in procession to St. Peter's Fields, carrying flags, on which were inscribed such legends as "Equal Representation or Death," "Universal Suffrage," and "No Corn Laws." The chair was taken by Mr. Hunt, a blacking-manufacturer, and he had just begun his address when the Manchester Yeomanry advanced upon the quiet and orderly people.* The magistrates had instructed them to support the chief constable in arresting Mr. Hunt, and other leading Reformers; but, owing to their ill-directed movements, they got into the thick of the crowd, and were so hemmed in as to be utterly powerless. The 15th Hussars, summoned to their rescue, charged sword in hand. The crowd fled before their naked sabres, like chaff before the

* 'Annual Register' for 1819, pp. 105, 106.

wind; the leaders were arrested; and the meeting was quickly dispersed, but in the affray five or six persons lost their lives, and between 300 and 400 were wounded, either cut down by the soldiery, trampled under the hoofs of their horses, or injured in their attempts to escape. The incident excited a wide-spread feeling of indignation; and though not deserving the exaggerated designation of "the Peterloo Massacre," popularly given to it, was unquestionably an outrage upon the rights of free citizens. Much doubt was entertained whether even the Riot Act had been read. If read it was not heard; and the rush of the cavalry was as unexpected as it was unjustifiable. The Ministry, however, thanked both the magistrates and the military for their conduct; and proceeded in their rigid and unconstitutional course.

Canning was on a visit to Paris when the Peterloo catastrophe occurred; but he returned on the opening of the Parliamentary session, and assisted in carrying the notorious "Six Acts," which "strengthened the executive" at the expense of the liberty of the subject. It is scarcely possible to conceive of any Government now venturing to introduce, or any House of Commons consenting to pass, such coercive measures. It is almost as difficult to believe that any peer would now write as Lord Redesdale wrote then:—"I doubt whether it would not have been fortunate for the country if half Manchester had been burned, and Glasgow had endured a little singeing." The tyrannical spirit of the ruling class was as bad a sign of the disturbed condition of society as the discontented spirit of the governed. It is always unfortunate for a country when its rulers are feeble, because

feeble rulers are subject to panics; and "the Six Acts" were obviously the result of panic. Their effect was to prohibit the publication of all political writings offensive to the Government, and to restrict the right of public meeting within almost impracticable limits.* The punishments imposed, transportation and banishment, were monstrously disproportionate to the character of the offences for which they were inflicted. Yet Canning was foremost in the defence of the oppressive system thus imposed upon a loyal and peaceable population. Some of his wittiest and most brilliant speeches were delivered in support of these arbitrary measures of Sidmouth and Castlereagh; the two men whom he had at one time so mercilessly ridiculed, and for whom he entertained so profound a contempt. One of his biographers endeavours to justify or excuse him by ascribing his excessive zeal to the nervous uneasiness of the relation in which he stood to his colleagues. "Keenly alive to the unpopularity of his position, rendered conspicuous above all the rest by the splendour of his aims, it seems as if this very consciousness only made him the more anxious to assume a confidence in the proceedings of the Government, which

* By the fourth of these Acts, no meeting of more than fifty persons was permitted to be held without six days' notice being given by seven householders to a resident justice of the peace; and all but freeholders or inhabitants of the county, parish, or township, were prohibited from attending, under penalty of fine and imprisonment. The justice could change the proposed time and place of meeting; but no meeting was permitted to adjourn itself. Every meeting tending to incite the people to hatred and contempt of the King's person, or the government and constitution of the realm, was declared an unlawful assembly; and extraordinary powers were given to justices for the dispersion of such meetings, and the capture of persons attending them.—Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History,' ii. 199, 200.

his judgment must secretly have discovered. To this mental warfare must be attributed the unusual bitterness he manifested towards his opponents throughout the time he held the office of President of Council. He never showed so much excitement or impatience before. The slightest contradiction called him up, and all questions, from the spirit in which they were treated, became more or less personal before they were finally disposed of. He was ill at ease with himself; and dissatisfied with the distorting circumstances by which he was surrounded." The answer to this explanation or apology—call it which you will—is obvious. Canning could easily have severed himself from his uncongenial colleagues. He was not a poor man, and office was not a necessity. The position he occupied was hardly one to gratify his ambition. It was inferior to that of the two men whom he most despised. It gave him no effective control over the policy of the Government, in which Castlereagh unquestionably was the ruling mind. Nothing is more puzzling in Canning's career than his acceptance of a subordinate office in the Liverpool Administration; his consenting to serve with Castlereagh and Sidmouth, on account of whom, only a few years before, he had refused the seals of the Foreign Secretaryship. We have seen him, at the outset of his public life, declaring that it was through character he intended to advance to power. It is unfortunate that when asked to join the Liverpool Cabinet he forgot this salutary maxim. It is more unfortunate that by remaining in the Cabinet he shared the responsibility of its follies and its crimes. But the truth is, that Canning, though sprung from the people, had no real sympathy

with them, and little knowledge of them. He is not the first, certainly not the only, man of culture, who has evinced a disposition to govern with the strong hand. No doubt he wished the people to be happy and contented; but they were to take their happiness and contentment as their rulers thought fit, and not to indulge in criticisms on the blessed constitution which had enabled Canning to attain to political power. It is a fact that nowhere in his speeches will be found any large and liberal utterances; any of those elevated thoughts and broad views of political liberty which lent so precious a radiance to the speeches of Burke and Fox. They are bright with splendid invective, with flashes of airy wit, with gleams of playful fancy; but they all come from the head, not from the heart. They are deficient in earnestness, in enthusiasm; they are the speeches of an able politician, but not of a statesman of the first rank.

The death of George the 3rd, towards the end of January, 1820, forced upon Ministers a dissolution of Parliament,* and led to very considerable changes in the political situation. In the following March, Canning sustained a severe domestic calamity in the death of his eldest son, a youth of the highest promise, in the 19th year of his age. The fine epitaph in which he commemorated him has been deservedly admired for the simplicity of its pathos and its beauty of expression.* Little leisure was left him, however, for private sorrow. The Princess of Wales, by the accession of her

* It was prorogued, preparatory to its dissolution; on the 28th February; five days after the day selected by Thistlewood and the "Cato Street conspirators" for the intended assassination of the Ministers.

husband to the throne, had become Queen Consort, and thence arose a series of dangerous complications. Contrary to the advice of her best friends, she came back to England, resolved to compel an acknowledgment of her claims as the wife of the Sovereign. The King immediately determined upon vengeance. He had already intimated to his ministers his desire to obtain a divorce; but at that time they had firmly opposed him, and stated their objections in Cabinet minutes as decisive as they were able. But, with the exception of Canning, they had promised to withdraw their opposition if the Queen returned to England. To prevent her return, they had offered her an annuity of £50,000, if she would renounce the title and continue to reside abroad. Irritated by the insults and persecutions to which she had been subjected, she refused the offer; but, after her arrival in England, she, in her turn, undertook to withdraw her pretensions, if her name were entered in the Prayer Book of the Church of England, and her title recognised in at least one foreign court. The King met this proposal with a stern refusal; and the Ministers, Canning still holding aloof, moved in the House of Lords that certain papers criminating the Queen * should be referred to a Committee of Secrecy. On the report of this Committee was founded a Bill of Pains and Penalties, depriving the Queen of her titles, rights, and prerogatives, and dissolving her marriage. The Government were not blind to

* These papers contained the evidence collected by Sir John Leach's Commission, the members of which assembled at Milan in September, 1818, and made their report to the Cabinet in the following July.

the difficulties into which this procedure would plunge them. Lord Eldon himself had said only a few months before: "I think no Administration who have any regard for him [the King] will go the length he wishes, as an Administration,—and if they will, they cannot take Parliament along with them; that body is afraid of disclosures,—not on one side only,—which may affect the monarchy itself." But, with unequalled political fatuity, they yielded to the King's desire for revenge on a woman whose failings were in no small measure due to his ill-usage of her.*

* The Ministers, however, having once made the plunge, showed a considerable degree of ardour. We need not here repeat the details of the disgusting investigation into the unfortunate Queen's conduct, which was carried on before the Lords. Brougham and Denman acted as her counsel, and exhibited the utmost dexterity and courage in her defence; while the tide of popular feeling against the King and his Ministers rose higher every day. "The discussion of the Queen's business," says Mr. Greville, "is now become an intolerable nuisance in society; no other subject is ever talked of. It is an incessant matter of argument and dispute what will be done and what ought to be done." The Whig leaders took up the Queen's cause, on the ground that the proceedings against her were unjust and unconstitutional; and one effect of this was to draw them nearer to the Radical party. Political feeling was thus introduced into the matter; the Whigs became the Queen's friends, and the Tories the King's friends. Greville, writing on the 15th of October, says:—"Ministers look upon this trial in the light of a campaign, and upon each day's proceedings as a sort of battle, and by the impression made by the evidence they consider that they have gained a victory or sustained a defeat. Their anxiety that this Bill should pass is quite inconceivable, for it cannot be their interest that it should be carried; and as for the King, they have no feeling whatever for him. The Duke of Portland told me that he conversed with the Duke of Wellington upon the subject, and urged as one of the reasons why this Bill should not pass the House of Lords the disgrace that it would entail upon the King by the recrimination that would ensue in the House of Commons. His answer was 'that the King was degraded as low as he could be already.'"—C. GREVILLE, 'Journal of the reigns of George the 4th and William the 4th,' i. 86, 87.

Canning, in the House of Commons, had openly disavowed the ministerial measures. Referring to the Queen, he said: "So help me God! I will never place myself in the situation of an accuser towards that individual." He hastened to tender his resignation to the King, but unwilling that the Cabinet should be weakened by his withdrawal, the King insisted on refusing it, giving him full liberty to hold aloof from the proceedings against his unfortunate Consort (June 25th). In the following August, Canning went abroad. It was at this time that the Lords began to examine the King's witnesses, and to hear the arguments of counsel on both sides,—after which the Pains and Penalties Bill was read a second time by 123 to 95 votes. It then went into Committee. The Opposition were aware that many of the Peers favourable to the Bill were nevertheless unwilling to accept the divorce clause; and that, therefore, by securing the retention of this clause, the majority for the third reading would be diminished. Hence was seen the extraordinary spectacle of the Opposition Lords voting in favour of the clause, and nine of the Ministers voting against it. The result was the retention of the clause by 129 to 62 votes. On the 10th of November the Bill came up for the third reading, which was carried by only 108 to 99. So small a majority foreshadowed its rejection in the Commons, and the Ministers, therefore, much to the popular satisfaction,* withdrew the bill.

* "London was spontaneously, though partially, illuminated for three successive nights—those who did not concur in the general joy, and they were many, joining in the festivity from a dread of the sovereign mob, and

Canning now returned from the Continent. He found the Government greatly weakened by their injudicious proceedings; and he foresaw that the discussions which these would necessarily originate in the session of 1821 would be exceedingly damaging. He again tendered his resignation, which, this time, was accepted. Lord Dudley writes:—"Canning, you see, is out. He has, however, no sort of quarrel with his late colleagues. His reason for retiring is simply this:—he had from the beginning determined to take no share in the proceedings as to the Queen. These proceedings, or at least questions connected with them, are to form the main business of the approaching session. He thinks that absence or neutrality of one of the King's principal servants would be disrespectful towards his master and discreditable to himself . . . The loss of him will be severely felt in the House of Commons. Peel, I take for granted, is to be his successor. We shall witness a most terrible struggle. The parties are more nearly balanced than they have been for many years. On the one hand is the immense power of the Crown; on the other a most decided superiority of parliamentary talent. The Ministers have the old Tory feeling in their

of the instant penalty of having their windows broken, which in general followed any resistance to its mandates. Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Liverpool, and all the great towns, followed their example. For several days the populace in all the cities of the empire seemed to be delirious with joy; nothing had been seen like it before since the battle of Waterloo; nothing approaching to it after, till the Reform Bill was passed. Addresses were voted to the Queen from the Common Council of London, and all the popular constituencies in the kingdom."—ALISON, 'History of Europe from the Fall of Napoleon,' ii. 467.

favour; the Opposition are aided by the cry against the late measures to the Queen, and by the great personal unpopularity of the King. I think the Ministers will stand their ground; but the first advance of the Saracens under their renowned Emir Brougham will be firm and terrible." *

On the 28th of February, 1821, Mr. (afterwards Lord) Plunkett, in a speech of remarkable eloquence, submitted a motion in favour of Catholic Emancipation. On this question Canning had always preserved an entire consistency of opinion, if not of conduct, and he supported Plunkett's motion with evident earnestness:— "We are in the enjoyment of a peace," he said, "achieved in a great degree by Catholic arms, and cemented by Catholic blood. For three centuries we have been erecting mounds, not to assist or improve, but to thwart nature; we have raised them high above the waters, where they have stood for many a year frowning proud defiance on all who attempted to cross them; but, in the course of ages, even they have been nearly broken

* Henry Brougham, born in Edinburgh in September, 1778, was educated at the High School and University of Edinburgh, and at a very early age gave abundant promise of extraordinary abilities. He was one of the most versatile of men; in science and literature, as well as in law and politics, pressing forward to the front rank. Having qualified for the English bar, he began to practise in the Queen's Bench in 1808. He entered parliament in 1810; but his public career dates from 1816, when he became the most powerful opponent of Canning, and the chief debater on the Whig side of the House. As leading counsel for Queen Caroline he gained an immense popularity. His extraordinary gifts were to some extent neutralised by his inconsistency, his arrogance, and his extravagant self-assertion. On the whole he failed as a politician; but he accomplished some memorable legal reforms, and laboured successfully for the diffusion of useful knowledge.

down, and the narrow isthmus now formed between them stands between

> 'Two kindred seas,
> Which, mounting, viewed each other from afar,
> And longed to meet.'

Shall we, then, fortify the mounds which are almost in ruins? or shall we leave them to moulder away by time or accident? — an event which, though distant, must happen, and which, when it does, will only confer a thankless favour—or shall we at once cut away the isthmus that remains, and float on the mingling waves the ark of our common constitution" ?*

The principal speaker against the motion was Mr. Peel, who, as a follower of Perceval, had acquired considerable influence in the House of Commons, and had recently accepted the Home Secretaryship. At this time, as a contemporary writer remarks, his political predilections, sympathies, principles, and prejudices, were very much the same with those of Lord Sidmouth; so that the substitution of the one for the other had had no effect on the course of administration. He was the recognised spokesman of the extreme section of the Tory party. On this occasion, however, his opposition proved unsuccessful; the second reading of the bill was carried by a majority of 11 (254 to 243), increased on the third reading to 19 (216 to 197). In the Lords it was rejected; but thoughtful observers were from this time convinced that the ultimate triumph of the movement could not be long delayed. The future success of a measure, akin to it in principle, that for the enlarged

* 'Parliamentary Debates,' iv. 1311.

representation of the people, might also have been predicted with certainty in this session, the minority in favour of Lord John Russell's Reform Bill being unexpectedly large and confessedly influential.

On the question of Reform, Canning clung to the old dogmas of the Tory party, though it is difficult to understand why, in the one measure, he should have seen anything more revolutionary than in the other. But in the spring of 1822 it seemed probable that his career as an English politician would be terminated, or, at least, suspended. The splendid post of the Governor-Generalship of India was offered to and accepted by him. Many were surprised that he should thus consent to withdraw from the arena where he had won such brilliant victories. But his private fortune had been considerably impaired, and the noble income of the Indian Viceroyalty was not without its attraction. Moreover, the King's antipathy to him, excited by his magnanimous refusal to concur in the persecution of the Queen,* promised to exclude him for years from official advancement at home; while it must be admitted that for the highest genius and the loftiest ambition, India offered and offers a great field of activity.

Having accepted the appointment, he repaired to Liverpool to take leave of his constituents. At Liverpool he had always been popular. It had returned him

* Mr. Stapleton ascribes the royal animosity not so much to Canning's *personal* conduct as to the active part taken by Canning's friends in the House of Lords against the Pains and Penalties Bill, which the King attributed (erroneously) to Canning's influence.— 'George Canning and His Times,' p. 323.

to Parliament four times in succession, and always by large majorities. His connection with the great seaport had been commemorated by the formation of a "Canning Club." During his visits to Liverpool, he usually resided at Seaforth House, belonging to his friend Mr. Gladstone, the father of the distinguished statesman who has achieved a fame greater even than that of Canning's. As he journeyed to Liverpool, in August, 1822, he received the startling intelligence that the Marquis of Londonderry* (Lord Castlereagh had succeeded to the Marquisate in the previous year) had died by his own hand, and that Canning was generally regarded as his successor. But the contingency, knowing what he did of the King's feelings, seemed to him very dubious, and he continued his route to Liverpool. There, on the 22nd, he dined with the Canning Club; and on the morning of the 30th, received an address from his con-

* "It seems Lord Londonderry had been unwell for some time, but not seriously, and a few days before this catastrophe he became much worse, and was very much dejected. He told Lord Grenville some time ago that he was worn out with fatigue, and he told Count Munster the other day that he was very ill indeed. The Duke of Wellington saw him on Friday, and was so struck by the appearance of illness about him that he sent Bankhead to him. He was cupped on Saturday in London, got better, and went to Foot's Cray. On Sunday he was worse, and the state of dejection in which he appeared induced his attendants to take certain precautions, which unfortunately, however, proved fruitless. They removed his pistols and his razors, but he got hold of a penknife which was in the room next his, and on Sunday night or early on Monday morning he cut his throat with it.... No event ever gave rise to more speculation with the few people there are left to speculate, and the general opinion seems to be that Canning will not go to India, but will be appointed in his room. It certainly opens a door to his ambition as well as to that of Peel."—C. GREVILLE, 'Journal,' i. 52.

stituents, in which all the Mercantile Associations concurred. In the evening he was entertained at the Lyceum by upwards of 500 gentlemen. From the speeches delivered on these occasions we extract a few illustrative passages:

"Apart from the interests of separate classes, we have all a common interest in the conservation of that order of things which is the security of the whole. We must feel, I am sure, and none feel more than those whom I am addressing, that it would be a peevish and unthinking spirit which, under the irritation of a temporary inconvenience, should quarrel, not with the immediate sources of immediate suffering, but with all that surrounds them, with all that is contemporary with them, with passive circumstances as well as with active causes; as a child, in its anger, beats the ground because for a moment it has fallen. To maintain to our native land that supremacy which it has long exercised, we must look to the maintenance of its institutions; and if, in a moment of uncomfortable pressure, we lay hold, in anger, on those established institutions, and shake them to ruin, we may be perfectly sure that, while we produce no remedy for the evil that assails us, we shall take from our posterity,—probably from ourselves,—the means of safety as well as the hope of reparation."

In reference to Parliamentary Reform he said:—

"My purpose is mistaken, if it is supposed that I impute to those who support the question a distinct apprehension of the consequences to which, I think, their doctrines lead, and a design to promote these

consequences. It is with their doctrines that I quarrel, and not with their motives; and it has been my desire always to discuss the question argumentatively, rather than angrily, with those who are opposed to me in opinion. I wish them to state to me—to me? I wish them to state to themselves distinctly, the object which they have in view, and the means they think they have to attain it. Why, what are the general arguments by which we are urged to admit a change in the constitution of the House of Commons? These arguments are derived from expensive wars, from heavy taxes, and from severe enactments, constituting, as is affirmed, so many outrageous inroads upon the constitution. Granted, for argument's sake, that all these charges are true. Granted that all the proceedings of Parliament, for many years past, have been reprehensible. But were they the proceedings of the House of Commons alone? Does the British Constitution act by a single organ? Has there been no concurrence in the maintenance of these wars, no consent to the imposition of these taxes, no co-operation in the passing of those enactments? Is there no other assembly in existence which partook of the opinions in which the House of Commons has proceeded, and which would make, therefore, the reform of the House of Commons nugatory for the professed purposes, unless the co-ordinate authority was also reformed? If you reform the House of Commons, on the grounds of past misconduct, what will you do with the House of Lords?"

"I have never stated it as a beauty of the constitution, that Old Sarum should have but as many voters as

representatives. Let it have two thousand, with all my heart. I have never stated it as a beauty and perfection of the constitution that this or that great peer should be able to return persons of his choice as the representatives of the people in Parliament. I have never said, that detected corruption should not be punished. In God's name, disfranchise other corrupt boroughs as you disfranchised Grampound. But I have said, and I repeat, that I see no way of counteracting the influence of property, and that I can imagine no process of amputation of close boroughs, — on the ground, not of practical punishment, but of speculative improvement, and on the principle that the House of Commons ought to speak the direct sense of the people, —which does not lead by inevitable influence, to a total alteration of the functions of the House of Commons. If by "people" is meant the nation (and it is in the equivocal use of this word, that much of the fallacy of the argument lies); if an assembly "representing the people" is meant to be the undoubted exclusive organ of national will, I ask, when the nation has even such an organ, what room is there for another legislative establishment? How can a second exist, and what is it to do?

"In the times in which we live, there is (disguise it as we may) a struggle going on,—in some countries an open, and in some a tacit struggle, between the principles of monarchy and democracy. God be praised, that in that struggle we have not any part to take. God be praised, that we have long ago arrived at all the blessings that are to be derived from that which

alone can end such a struggle beneficially,—a compromise and intermixture of those conflicting principles. It is not as it appears to me, the duty of this country to side either with the assailants, where they aim at too much, nor with those who stand on the defensive, when they will grant nothing. England has only to maintain herself on the basis of her own solid and settled constitution, firm, unshaken,—a spectatress interested in the contest only by her sympathies;—not a partisan on either side, but, for the sake of both, a model, and ultimately, perhaps, an umpire. Should we be led, by any false impulse of chivalrous benevolence, to participate in the struggle itself, we commit, and thereby impair our authority; we abandon the position in which we might hereafter do most good, and may bring the danger of a foreign struggle home to our own hearths and to our own institutions."

It is unnecessary to offer any remarks on the arguments to which Canning has here resorted. Time has sufficiently exposed their fallacy.

The vacancy at the Foreign Office was not very easily filled. As soon as the King was apprised of Londonderry's death, he wrote to the Prime Minister, requesting him "not to make any proposal at present with a view of supplying the lamentable void," and significantly desiring him "not to interrupt, and on no occasion impede the arrangements which were already settled respecting India, as it was his decision that they should remain final and unalterable."* He

* Yonge, 'Life of Lord Liverpool,' iii. 195.

even canvassed Peel, who was then attending him on his triumphant procession through Scotland, endeavouring to persuade him to accept the office and the leadership of the Commons. Both Peel and Liverpool felt, however, that Canning's accession to the Cabinet was indispensable; and they knew that he would refuse any office which was unaccompanied by the leadership. They had to conquer not only the King's antipathy, but the opposition of Lord Eldon, and the reluctance of most of the Ministers. At length, with the assistance of the Duke of Wellington and the Marchioness of Conyngham, whose influence with the King was only too considerable, every obstacle was removed, and Lord Liverpool received a royal letter which, from the extraordinary character of its terms, deserves to be quoted:—

Carlton House, September 8th, 1822.

"The King has given the fullest consideration to the proposition submitted by Lord Liverpool relative to the admission of Mr. Canning into the King's Government.

The King has always been justly impressed with the value of Mr. Canning's talents, and the King had taught himself to believe that such talents might and ought to have been exercised for the benefit of his Sovereign and his country.

When Mr. Canning thought proper to tender his resignation to the King, and to retire from the King's councils, the King expressed to Mr. Canning his regret that the country was to be deprived of his services.

It was at this period of time that the King had

reason to view with surprise the line of conduct which Mr. Canning then, and afterwards, thought proper to adopt.

The King forbears to enter into details; the King is aware that the brightest ornament of his crown is the power of extending grace and favour to a subject who may have incurred his displeasure.

The King therefore permits Lord Liverpool to propose Mr. Canning's readmission into the Government, and the King desires that the communication may be made to Mr. Canning by the transmission of this note."

Canning accepted the olive branch thus graciously held out to him.* The great object of his ambition

* Mr. Greville is responsible for the following interesting details:— "When the King had consented to receive Canning, he wrote a letter nearly in these words to Lord Liverpool: The King thinks that the brightest jewel in the crown is to extend his forgiveness [I am not sure that this was the word] to a subject who has offended him, and he therefore informs Lord Liverpool that he consents to Mr. Canning forming a part of the Cabinet. This letter was communicated by Lord Liverpool to Canning, and upon reading it he was indignant, as were his wife and daughter. The consequence was, that he wrote a most violent and indignant reply, addressed to the same person to whom the other letter had been addressed, and which was intended in like manner to be shown to the King, as the King's letter was to him. Upon hearing what had passed, however, down came Lord Grenville and Mr. Ellis in a great hurry, and used every argument to dissuade him from sending the letter, urging that he had entirely misunderstood the purport of the letter which had offended him; that it was intended as an invitation to reconciliation, and contained nothing which could have been meant as offensive; that the country would be so dissatisfied (which ardently desired and expected that he should come into office) if he rejected this overture; that he would not be justified in refusing his services to the public, who so anxiously wished for them. These arguments, vehemently urged and put in every possible shape, prevailed, and the angry reply was put in the fire, and another written full of gratitude, duty, and acquiescence."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 58, 59.

was attained. He had won the prize for which he had worked and waited. He was the Leader of the House of Commons. Yet he seems to have felt some reluctance in abandoning the golden promises and vast possibilities of the Indian Viceroyalty; or he may have imagined when the fruits of victory were really in his grasp, that he cared less for them than was really the case. We get a glimpse of his views and feelings in a private letter, which he at this time addressed to an old friend (Sir Charles Bagot):—

"By far the greater number of considerations," he says, "were against acceptance, and to the last day I hoped that the proposal made to me might be one which I could refuse. That which has been made was the only one that I could not—about any other I should not—have had the slightest hesitation. The die being cast, I must make the best of that lot which has fallen to me, and place public duty against private liking and convenience. But two years have made a world of difference, and prepared a very different sort of world to bustle in than that which I should have found in 1812. For fame, it is a squeezed orange; but for public good there is something to do, and I will try—but it must be cautiously—to do it. You know my politics well enough to know what I mean, when I say that for *Europe*, I shall be desirous *now* and *then* to read *England*."

The meaning of the concluding words is to be arrived at by comparing them with a passage from his speech at Plymouth, a few months later:—*

"The language of modern philosophy," he said, "is

* Stapleton, 'George Canning and His Times,' pp. 364, 365.

widely and diffusely benevolent; it professes the perfection of our species, and the amelioration of the lot of all mankind. Gentlemen, I hope that my heart beats as high for the general interests of humanity—I hope that I have as friendly a disposition towards other nations of the earth, as any one who vaunts his philanthropy most highly; but I am contented to confess that in the conduct of political affairs, the grand object of my contemplation is the interest of England. Not that the interest of England is an interest which stands isolated and alone. The situation which she holds forbids an exclusive selfishness. Her prosperity must contribute to the prosperity of surrounding nations, and her stability to the safety of the world. But intimately connected as we are with the system of Europe, it does not follow that we are, therefore, called upon to mix ourselves on every occasion, with a restless and meddling activity, in the concerns of the nations which surround us. It is upon a just balance of conflicting duties, and of rival, but sometimes incompatible advantages, that a Government must judge when to put forth its strength, and when to husband it for occasions yet to come. Our ultimate object must be the peace of the world."

VI.

Mr. Canning now became, not only by virtue of his position as leader of the House of Commons and Foreign Secretary, but by his superior talents and oratorical powers, the most important and prominent person in the Liverpool Administration, as Lord Castlereagh had been before him. And here we may observe that the popular opinion of Lord Castlereagh's incompetency, which was carefully stimulated by the Whig caricaturists, and by Moore, Byron, and the wits generally, was wholly unfounded. He was not a man of genius; he possessed little general knowledge; his speech was remarkable for confusion of thought and poverty of expression; yet he contrived to hold his own against Tierney, Huskisson, and Brougham, and to manage the business of the House of Commons with indisputable success. His personal influence was great, and it was well deserved by his courage, his directness of purpose, and his dignity of bearing. He knew what he wanted; and such was his strength of will and his force of character that he usually succeeded in obtaining it. His views of policy were the narrowest possible, but when once they had been formed, he did not easily relinquish them; and as he never looked at more than one side of a question, he had no inducement to vacillate. The unmerited ridicule heaped upon him has induced

Lord Brougham to remark that he is certainly the most striking example of the effects produced by our parliamentary system of government, in most unjustly lowering the reputation of public men who happen not to succeed in debate. No one would speak of him as a statesman or even as a great leader of party. He owed his elevation to a fortunate combination of circumstances, and to the mistakes of Canning; but it is just to admit that he was, according to his lights, an honest politician, and, in many respects, an efficient minister." *

* This comparatively favourable estimate of his abilities and character is confirmed by Sir George Lewis, who says:—"Lord Castlereagh did not indeed possess those advantages which aristocratic birth and education have conferred on many of our statesmen. His knowledge, whether constitutional, historical, or classical, was of the most limited sort; he belonged to the illiterate school of politicians, and would doubtless have sympathised heartily with the modern dictum that more instruction is to be derived from one number of the *Times* than from the history of Thucydides. His political life had, however, begun at an early age; he had been the Irish ministerial leader at the time of the Rebellion and the Union; his parliamentary and official experience had been extensive, and his mode of transacting the business of the English House of Commons was such as to satisfy that somewhat fastidious assembly even at a time when its intellectual standard was high. He navigated the ship of the State through the Syrtis of the distress and disaffection of 1817 and 1819; he withstood the shock of the Queen's trial, and when the short attack of insanity supervened which brought his life to a premature close at the age of fifty-three, he seemed to have taken a new lease of power."—Sir G. C. Lewis, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' p. 425. Mr. Horace Twiss says:—"In the judgment of persons who understood the practical objects of parliamentary debate, his general defects of style were fully compensated by those other more essential merits which he eminently combined—his long experience and accurate knowledge of public affairs, his leading spirit, his clearness and grasp of understanding, his judicious selection of topics, his gallant adherence to his friends

The foreign policy of the Government was completely changed when its direction was assumed by Canning. Lord Castlereagh had carried into it the arbitrary tendencies and the sympathies, with measures of repression and coercion which he had acquired in his Irish experiences; and these had not been modified by his co-operation in the home administration of Perceval and Sidmouth. He was in favour of a strong Government everywhere; and his ideal of a strong Government was one which kept down, at whatever cost, all manifestations of public opinion. He desired to rule well, and wished others to rule well, but did not hold it necessary that the rulers should carry with them the goodwill of the ruled. As at home he objected to movements in favour of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform, because they were not approved by the Crown and the Ministry; so, abroad, he looked with coldness on the attempts of oppressed subjects to gain their constitutional rights when he saw that they threatened the permanency of established institutions. It was always his inclination to support the *status quo*. He took as his motto, "Whatever is, is right;" the existence of a thing, even if it were an abuse, was, in his eyes, its sufficient justification. But it would be unfair to take no account of a higher and better

and followers, and (which was by no means the least important with such an assembly as the House of Commons) the dignity of his aspect and bearing . . . Though not placed officially at the head of the Government, he enjoyed perhaps a larger share of its credit and power than was possessed by the First Minister of the Crown."—'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 463.

consideration which weighed powerfully with Castlereagh and his colleagues. Wearied by the prolonged anxiety of the war against Napoleon, their first object was the preservation of peace; and seeing in France the great disturber of the European settlement, to take securities against any restoration of her military preponderance. These various causes, for all combined to exercise their influence, led Castlereagh into the cardinal error of recognising the so-called "Holy Alliance,"—the "Holy Brotherhood," as Moore termed it,—or league of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. He did not foresee that this Alliance, ostensibly instituted for the purpose of preserving the European peace, was capable of being made an irresistible instrument for crushing in other countries the rights of the peoples, on the specious pretext that the efforts to assert them were fresh exhibitions of Jacobinism. Nor was he able to understand the extent of the moral and intellectual changes which had necessarily resulted from the French Revolution. He saw no reason why the old order should not at once be re-established. For him the Revolution had expired on the field of Waterloo. He did not perceive that its real power was beginning to assert itself; that it had previously been weakened by the excesses of the Terrorists, and afterwards controlled for a while by the ambition of Napoleon; but that now it was doing its proper work in enlarging the views of men, in releasing their minds from the fetters of tradition and prescription, and encouraging the nations to assert the great truth that the essence of good government was the protection of the rights of all. He did

not perceive that a new life had been infused into the exhausted frame of European society; that a new spirit of inquiry and examination had taken possession of the people.

It is to the credit of Canning that he had arrived at an acknowledgment of these eventualities; that he had convinced himself, though somewhat tardily, of the folly of attempting to check a movement which was the natural issue of the great events of the eighteenth century. He had studied what was passing around him, and adapted his ideas to the actual exigencies of the time. He had appreciated the fact that the progress of society had outstripped the ancient conditions of government; that men, conscious of the intellectual development of their age, would no longer be bound by "the wisdom of their ancestors," or accept as suitable and sufficient for themselves the institutions which had been suitable and sufficient for previous generations. In other words, he had begun to adopt some of those Whig principles which he had hitherto so steadfastly opposed. The elasticity of his intellect enabled him with ease to assume this position, and from the moment that he took the lead, the Liverpool Ministry exhibited a more Liberal character. This satisfactory modification was assisted by the changes which were made in its *personnel.* Early in 1823, Mr. Vansittart was removed to the Upper House with the title of Lord Bexley, and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer was given to Mr. Frederick Robinson (afterwards Lord Goderich), who was succeeded as President of the Board of Trade by Mr. Huskisson, a man of enlightened views, and

one of the earliest supporters of Free Trade. Mr. Peel and Mr. Wynn had also places in the administration. The former on questions of religion and reform was, it is true, as bigoted as Eldon himself, but his economical creed was as liberal as that of Huskisson;* while the latter had belonged to the Grenville section of the Whigs, and was known to favour Catholic Emancipation. On the whole, the Liverpool-Canning Ministry was a very decided advance upon the Liverpool-Castlereagh.†

* "When out of office, he had been Chairman of the Bank Committee, and had introduced and carried, in 1819, the bill by which the convertibility of the bank-note was re-established, although he had entered on the inquiry with opposite opinions to those he was led by the evidence to adopt. [This was characteristic of Peel's entire career.] On questions of criminal jurisprudence, likewise, his opinions were far in advance, not only of Lord Eldon, and the Crown lawyers, but also of Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh; and, as Home Secretary, he gave practical effect to the doctrines which Sir Samuel Romilly and Sir James Mackintosh had in vain attempted to enforce."—Sir G. C. Lewis, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' p. 490.

† In order not to interrupt our review of Canning's foreign policy, we may advert, in a note, to his quarrel with Mr. Brougham in the session of 1823. In the course of debate he had observed that, in the then state of Parliament and the country, it seemed to him impossible to form a Ministry which should agree upon the Catholic and "other burning questions," so as to be able to carry on the business of the country. This remark was understood as an admission that he considered the cause of the Catholics hopeless; though he had not said, nor did he mean, that it was necessary, in order to carry them, that the whole Ministry should be in their favour. On the 17th of April, on the occasion of a petition in support of those claims being presented, a hot discussion took place, in which Mr. Tierney charged him with the ruin of the Catholic hopes, because he had taken office without making Emancipation a *sine quâ non*. Other speakers followed with language even more virulent and abusive, and at last Brougham poured out one of his copious and vehement invectives. Canning sat with flashing eye, quivering nostrils, and heated cheeks, compelling himself to be silent, until Brougham let drop the words, "monstrous truckling" and

This was soon perceptible in its conduct of foreign affairs. Canning had, unlike some of his successors, a *policy*; and he carried it out with all the energy and decision of his character. He set to work to dissolve the Holy Alliance, and withdraw England from entangling continental engagements; laying down the doctrine of non-intervention, not as applicable to England alone, but as binding on all the Powers. His remonstrances had little effect upon the deliberations of the congresses of Laybach and Vienna, but the influence of England was successfully exerted in dissolving the union of the great despotic courts. The arbitrary rule of the Bourbon King of Spain had provoked a very justifiable insurrection, with which the great majority of the people of England sympathised. France, however, proposed to send a large army into Spain to crush the popular movement; and submitted a proposal to this effect to the Powers assembled in Congress at Vienna. Instructed by Canning, the Duke of Wellington, who represented Great Britain, opposed it strongly; and when it was approved by the Allies, withdrew from further participation in the proceeding of the Congress.

"political tergiversation." Then, springing to his feet, he exclaimed, "I rise to say that that is false." For some seconds the House was still; even the Speaker seemed paralysed. On recovering himself, he said, in a low tone, that the expression used by Mr. Canning was in violation of the laws and customs of the House, and he hoped it would be retracted. The Minister refused to withdraw "the sentiment," and Mr. Brougham would not explain away his imputation. After much angry discussion, the difficulty was evaded by a declaration that the charge referred to Mr. Canning's political and not his private character."—Hansard, viii. 1087, 1088.

The French invasion it is true, took place; but Canning succeeded in preventing it from being made "a joint act of European policy." And when he found that its success had temporarily destroyed Spain's liberty of action, and placed her resources at the disposal of France, he conceived and executed a counter-stroke of unquestionable efficacy.* The American colonies of Spain, goaded to desperation by long years of misgovernment, had thrown off the yoke of the mother-country. Mr. Canning at once laid down the principle that the European Powers had no claim to interfere with their action, and consequently no right to assist Spain in her efforts to reconquer them. And when they had established a settled government, he did not hesitate, in spite of the opposition, both direct and indirect, of the Duke of Wellington, to recognise their independence (December, 1824). This was a proceeding which exhibited Canning as something much better than a clever politician. It showed that he could rise to the elevation of true statesmanship. And its success is all the more honourable because achieved in defiance of the European Powers, yet without war; and in the face of so much opposition from the King and the Cabinet, † that he was twice compelled to threaten his resignation.

* Take his own words: — "Consistently with the situation in which Spain is placed by the indefinite occupation of her strong places by the arms of a foreign Power, she cannot be considered as a free agent, and that, of course, Spain is essentially French in her foreign policy, it becomes our duty to prevent Spanish America from being brought within the same subjection."

† He was cordially supported, however, by Lord Liverpool.

We have referred to the opposition which Canning's foreign policy met with from the Crown. He himself attributed it in no small degree to the intrigues of the Continental Courts, and especially to the representations made by Metternich, the Austrian premier, to the vacillating King. In writing to Lord Granville, our ambassador at Paris, on the 4th of April, 1825, he thus expresses himself:—"I very much wish," on the supposition that Metternich was about to resume his plotting, "that he should know how well I am apprised of all the *good* which he intended to me. I should like him to understand, that a renewal of similar attempts may lead to some such public manifestation of my knowledge of what has passed, as may let the House of Commons and the public into the secret. I wonder whether he is aware that the private communication of foreign Ministers with the King of England is wholly at variance with the spirit, and practice too, of the British Constitution." It was not unnatural that Canning should resent the underhand system encouraged by the King, and a coldness sprang up between them which was favourable neither to the royal tranquillity of mind nor to the easy conduct of public business. In the spring of 1825 it seems to have occurred to the King that this state of affairs was unsatisfactory, and as he could not but own that Canning's policy had been brilliantly successful, that it had greatly increased the fame and influence of England, and consequently added to his personal renown, he employed Sir William Knighton, his confidential physician, to bring about a reconciliation (April 27th). An interview took

place at Canning's residence, Gloucester Lodge; and Knighton offered explanations which fully satisfied the Minister,* who, thenceforward, to the day of his death, was treated by the King with cordial goodwill and as much confidence as it was in his nature to exhibit.†

* See Canning's interesting account of this interview in Mr. Stapleton's 'George Canning and his Times,' pp. 437–444.

† In Mr. Greville's account of these transactions are found some additional details. He says that from the moment he entered the Cabinet Canning laboured to accomplish the negociations of the South American Republics, but that Lord Liverpool was the only Minister who supported, and that the King strongly opposed it. The King was encouraged in the line he took by the Duke of Wellington, Lieven and Esterhazy (the Russian and Austrian ambassadors), whom he used to have with him; and who persuaded him that if he consented, it would produce a quarrel between him and his Allies, and involve him in inextricable difficulties. Canning, who knew all this, wrote to Mrs. Canning in bitter terms, saying, that if the King did not take care he would not allow him to see these ambassadors except in his presence, and adding, "I can tell his Majesty that his father would never have acted in such a manner." (*a*) At length after a long contest, in the course of which Peel came round to him, he resolved to carry the measure or resign. After a battle in the Cabinets which lasted three hours and from which he came heatedly exhausted and indignant, he prepared a memorial to the King, and Lord Liverpool another, in which they tendered their resignation, giving their reasons at length, and this they submitted to the Cabinet on the following day. Their colleagues, finding they were in earnest, unanimously surrendered, and agreed to report to the King that all would resign unless the measure was adopted. The King thereupon gave way: "When he saw Canning he received him very ill, and in a letter to him signifying his assent to the measure, he said that it must be his business to have it carried into effect in the best way it would admit of. Canning took fire at the ungracious tone of the letter, and wrote for answer that he feared he was not honoured with that confidence which it was necessary that the King should have in his Ministers, and that his Majesty had better dismiss him at once. The

(*a*) Canning wrote to this effect to Lord Grenville.

The policy which had been so skilfully and steadily pursued with respect to Spain, Canning pursued in every fresh difficulty that came before him. The Treaty of London, which secured the co-operation of France and Russia in working out the ultimate liberation of Greece, was wholly due to his initiative. Everywhere he appeared as the champion of the rights of the people, and identified England with the cause of constitutional reform; while in no instance did he transgress the boundaries of the European settlement, or promote a purely revolutionary propaganda. His diplomacy, firm, straightforward, and distinct, accomplished its aims without any exhibition of military force, and it was only in the case of Portugal that he found it necessary to use a single soldier. When he fancied that Spain was bent upon overthrowing the free constitution of Portugal, he showed that he could strike at need, and with startling rapidity. In the last week of November, Spain, depending upon the secret support of France, crossed the Portuguese frontier at two points, one expedition penetrating into the northern provinces, the other menacing Lisbon itself. The Portuguese ambassador hastened to apply for the assistance Great Britain, by treaty, was bound to render. Both Mr. Canning and

King sent no answer, but a gracious message, assuring him that he had mistaken his letter, and desiring he would come to the cottage, when he received him very well. From that time he grew in favour, for where the King found that none of the evils predicted of this measure had come to pass, and how it raised the reputation of his Minister, he liked it very well, and Canning dexterously gave him all the praise of it; so that he soon fancied it had originated with himself, and became equally satisfied with himself and with Canning."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 105, 106.

Lord Liverpool were suffering at the time from illness; but they hastened to lay the matter before the Cabinet, and having obtained their consent, instantly ordered a body of 6000 troops, under Sir William Clinton, to proceed to Lisbon. It fell, of course, to Canning's lot to defend this measure in the house of Commons; and the speech which he then delivered has not unjustly been described as an appeal instinct with the old Roman spirit, and enforced with an eloquence such as, save from one mouth, the Roman Senate had never heard. Canning had never before risen to the height which he attained on this occasion. But it is noticeable that, if we may use the expression, he had *grown* greatly since his return to office. His views, as we have already hinted, were broader, his tendencies more liberal, his genius seemed to survey a wider horizon. Dealing with large questions, he had acquired a certain largeness of thought. Engaged in directing the destinies of nations, he had learned to throw aside his old prejudices, his old servile submission to authority, his respect for obsolete traditions; the very character of his oratory seemed changed. There was less wit, less vehement invective, less *persiflage;* more earnestness, and a certain impressive elevation of tone. This was apparent in the noble oration which "electrified" the House of Commons on the 12th of December:—

"England," he said, "was confident and secure from the consciousness of her strength, as well as from her resolve to use that strength solely for the benefit of the world. It is one thing to have a giant's strength, but it would be another to use it like a giant. The consciousness of such strength is undoubtedly a source

of confidence and security; but, in the situation in which this country stands, our business is not to seek opportunities of displaying it, but to content ourselves with letting the professors of violent and exaggerated doctrines on both sides feel that it is not their interest to convert an umpire into an adversary. The situation of England amidst the struggle of political opinions which agitates more or less sensibly the different countries of the world, may be compared to that of the ruler of the wind, as described by the poet:—

'Celsa sedet Æolus arce
Sceptra Tenens, emollitque animos et temperat iras;
Ni faciat maria ac terras cœlumque profundum
Quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras.'"

As to Spain, she was not the Spain of old:—

"Is the Spain of the present day, the Spain of which the statesmen of the times of William and Anne were so much afraid? Is it indeed the nation whose puissance was expected to shake England from her sphere? No, Sir, it was quite another Spain—it was the Spain within the limit of whose empire the sun never set—it was Spain *with the Indies* that excited the jealousies and alarmed the imaginations of our ancestors.

"The French expedition into Spain had, it was said, disturbed the balance of power. Admitting this to be true, should England have gone to war to restore it? Could that balance of power, which constantly varied with the growth and decay of nations, be in no other way adjusted?

"Was there no other mode of resistance than by a direct attack upon France, or by a war to be undertaken

on the soil of Spain? What, if the possession of Spain might be rendered harmless in other hands, harmless as regarded us, and valueless to the possessors? Might not compensation for disparagement be obtained, and the policy of our ancestors vindicated, by means better adapted to the present time? If France occupied Spain, was it necessary, in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation, that we should blockade Cadiz? No. I looked another way; I sought materials of compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain with the Indies. I called the new world into existence to redress the balance of the old." *

* The effect of this eloquent oration was very great. "Canning's speech was most brilliant; much more cheered by the Opposition than by his own friends. He is thought to have been imprudent, and he gave offence to his colleagues by the concluding sentence of his reply, when he said, "I called into existence the New World to redress the balance of the Old." The *I* was not relished. Brougham's compliment to Canning was magnificent, and he was loudly cheered by Peel; altogether it was a fine display."—GREVILLE, 'Memoirs,' i. 83. "The effect was actually terrific. It was as if every man in the House had been electrified. Tierney, who before that was shifting in his seat, and taking off his hat and putting it on again, and taking large and frequent pinches of snuff, and turning from side to side . . . seemed petrified, and sat fixed and staring, with his mouth open, for half a minute! Mr. Canning seemed actually to have increased in stature, his attitude was so majestic. I remarked his flourishes were made with his left arm: the effect was new and beautiful: his chest heaved and expanded, his nostril dilated, a noble pride slightly curled his lip; and age and sickness were dissolved and forgotten in the ardour of youthful genius! all the while a serenity sat on his brow that pointed to deeds of glory. It reminded me, and came up to what I have heard, of the effects of Athenian eloquence."—'Diary of an M.P.' (*apud* BELL, p. 342). Canning writes to Lord Granville (December 14th):—"If I know anything of

the House of Commons from thirty-three years' experience, or if I may trust to what reaches me in report of feelings out-of-doors, the declaration of the obvious but unsuspected truth, that 'I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old,' has been more grateful to English ears and to English feelings ten thousand times, than would have been the most satisfactory announcement of the intention of the French Government to withdraw its army from Spain,"—STAPLETON, 'George Canning and His Times,' pp. 546, 547.

"The sanction of Parliament was most enthusiastic; and so was the response from the country. But it is believed by those who ought to know, that this speech was fatal to Mr. Canning. His earnestness and eloquence were taken by the Tories as a demonstration in favour of liberalism. They well knew that he was in fact, though not in name, the leader of the Government. They knew that the Duke of York so clearly considered him so that he had just made an audacious attempt, by addressing the King, to get him dismissed from the Cabinet. They gave all their strength to bear him down, and wrought against him with a new exasperation from the date of his announcement of his having despatched the troops to Portugal. They could not bear him down in intention and in act. They could not bear him down in the estimation of the country, in which he was indeed rising from day to day, But there was a way in which he was in their power;—they enfeebled his health. They could not bow his noble head, tame his princely eye, by reproach or threat; but they could and did,—without design or consideration,—by the poison of disease. There are few men whose views are not more or less in the power of other men's judgments and tempers; and of those few Canning was certainly not one. His magnificent organisation, adequate to the production of everything that can ennoble the human being,—absolutely teeming with genius,—had the one imperfection of being too sensitive. This was so clear—so evident on the merest glance at his face,—that those have much to answer for who failed in the consideration thus bespoken by nature herself. Canning needed no indulgence. In the depth of illness, his high courage would have spurned it. He never deprecated:—never, we may be sure, in the innermost breathings of his soul. He provoked much, dared everything, and endured till nature broke down. But nature was breaking down all the time that his enemies were most merciless; and they never saw it. It was visible in the weakening brow, the deepening eye, the quivering lid, the heavy and uncertain step. His enemies did not mark these signs which grieved his friends; and when, in reply to their rancour, the eye flashed again as it was wont, and the cheek flushed, and the voice rang from the roof, they were sure they had done him no harm. From the

The Tory Government rested at this time on an apparently solid foundation of prosperity. "The land was at peace." The excitement which sprung up in the first years of the Peace had subsided. The discontent produced by the reactionary measures of Sidmouth and Castlereagh had faded away. Even the financial and commercial panics of 1825 and 1826 had been followed by no popular commotion. For forty-three years the Tory party, with the exception of a brief interval, had held office, carrying the country through a formidable struggle, and raising it to a level with the great military powers of Europe. It could point with reasonable pride to the tranquillity which prevailed, to the development of commercial enterprise,

time of his speech on sending aid to Portugal, the contest between Canning and his policy—and his foes and their policy, became deadly. It was indeed death that now interposed, and finally settled the conflict."—HARRIET MARTINEAU, 'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' i. 427, 428. There seems to us a good deal of exaggeration in this language. We can find no evidence that the opposition which Canning met with at this time exceeded the limits of Parliamentary warfare. And, however great may be our admiration of Canning, we must recollect that he provoked enmity by his reckless defiance of his antagonists, and by his free employment of his great powers of ridicule and sarcasm. Remembering his attacks on Fox and Addington, we find it difficult to concur in all Miss Martineau's eloquent expressions. Nor do we feel inclined to ascribe his illness to the sufferings inflicted by the rancour of his enemies. No doubt he felt it; no doubt he resented it. But it must be remembered that his organisation was not of a kind to withstand the wear and tear of Parliamentary life. He wore himself out. His sensitive nature and his abnormally active intellect overpowered his physical energies. It was the old story of the sword wearing through the scabbard. If his life were not a long one, counted by years, it was one of more than average duration, counted by thoughts, deeds, hopes, aspirations, sorrows, joys, failures, and triumphs.

to the increase in the national wealth, to the augmented influence of England abroad. But it is important to observe that much was due to the control which the Whig Opposition, strong in talents if not in numbers, had contrived to assert over the Ministerial policy. It had not been able to secure Catholic Emancipation, but it had taught men to regard it as a measure that could not be long delayed.* It had not prevented the Revolutionary war, but it had led the nation to accept with satisfaction the doctrine of non-intervention. It had

* The death of the Duke of York on the 5th January (1827) was an event of much greater importance than the death of a prince of our royal house usually is. Of all the sons of George the 3rd he was the ablest and the most honest. The services he rendered as the official head of the British Army are now acknowledged more freely and more generously than they were by his contemporaries. On the Catholic question he had formed a strong conviction; and he was not a man to give up a conviction either for a bribe or under a menace. So long as he lived, everybody knew that the Catholic claims would be steadily resisted. His position and his character made him a formidable opponent. His death, therefore, sensibly advanced the question towards a satisfactory settlement. It removed, also, a formidable obstacle from the path of Canning, whose increasing liberalism had grown more and more distasteful to the prince's ultra Toryism. In the opinion of Lord Eldon, had the Duke lived, he would have effectually counteracted that influence which, soon afterwards, placed at the head of the Administration "the great advocate in the House of Commons of the Roman Catholic claims, to whom the greatest aversion had been often expressed in the highest place," and continued him there, "although it was found necessary to his support in it that he should have the aid of all those whose principles, save with respect to that question, he had been combating in youth and in manhood, as an anti-Jacobin and an anti-Radical." (*a*).

(*a*) This is Lord Eldon's way of putting it.—See Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 581.

not succeeded in rejecting the Six Acts, but it had neutralised their worst consequences. It had popularised the ideas of religious equality and parliamentary reform; and it had steadily asserted the liberty of the press. It had never failed to justify the claims of public opinion against authority. Its association with the popular sentiment had not been without effect on the Tory party. It had leavened all but the extreme section of that party with Liberal principles. We have seen that Canning initiated in foreign politics a sympathetic and generous system. In like manner, Peel and Huskisson were breaking new ground in the regions of commerce and finance. To the old Tories, men of the school of Eldon and Bathurst and Melville, this desertion, as they deemed it, of the ancient landmarks, was a rock of offence. To Peel much might be forgiven; for, in the first place, financial heterodoxy was not easily detected, and, in the second, on the great test-question of Catholic Emancipation, he was undeniably sound; but they regarded with constantly increasing suspicion the actions of Canning and Huskisson. In the Cabinet these "divisive courses" were overruled by the calm good sense and judicious management of Lord Liverpool; but they had begun to appear in the House, and in the country they could not be concealed. Had Lord Liverpool lived they could not have been repressed in the Cabinet itself for any length of time; but his sudden prostration on the 17th of February, 1827, by an attack of paralysis, broke up the cohesion of the Tory party when such a catastrophe was least expected.

As soon as it was definitely known that his recovery was impossible,* the King entered into negotiations for the appointment of a successor. By right of genius, experience, popularity, and length of service, the post belonged to Canning; but his opinions on Catholic Emancipation were unpopular with the King, as well as with many of his colleagues, and the great majority of the Tory party. The two most important persons on the anti-Catholic side were the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel. The former was adverse to Canning's foreign policy as well as to his declarations in favour of religious equality; he had been the friend, and he inherited the political opinions, of Castlereagh. The personal relations of Peel and Canning were less unfriendly, but it was impossible to dissociate a certain amount of jealous feeling from their respective positions as leaders of the pro-Catholic and anti-Catholic sections of their party in the House of Commons.†

On the 27th of March, Canning had an interview with the King, and advised him to form an anti-Catholic Administration, offering to resign so as to facilitate the arrangement. He must have known, however, that such an Administration was impossible; and could not have been surprised that his counsel was rejected. The King wished to appoint a Prime Minister of anti-Catholic views, but to retain Canning as Foreign Secretary. In his turn Canning declined this proposal, declaring that he could not regard his opinions as an

* He lived, however, until the 4th of December, 1828, when, at the age of 58, he closed a useful and honourable, if not brilliant career.

† Sir G. C. Lewis, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' p. 436.

excuse for depriving him of the Premiership, and that if he retained office it must be with the "substantive power of First Minister." * Between the 31st of March and the 6th of April, he had several interviews with the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel, the latter of whom frankly intimated that he intended to resign if an individual favourable to the Roman Catholic claims should be placed at the head of the Government, while professing the greatest respect and regard for Canning himself. On the 3rd the Duke had "a long conversation" with Mr. Canning, who gave to his Grace "the fullest details of what had passed at his audience with his Majesty at Windsor; an audience of which he said to Sir William Knighton, 'Everything that was in doubt between us has been cleared up satisfactorily, and we parted, as you would have wished, all being well.'" The next move in this curious and unedifying game was a proposal from Peel † that the Duke of Wellington should be appointed

* "How," he said, "should he be able to show his face to those to whom, in and out of Parliament, he had always asserted (because he always believed) that the Catholic question was an open question on which the members of the Government were free to act according to their opinions, without entailing any disadvantageous consequences upon themselves, if he should allow it to be proved in his person, that those whose sentiments were favourable to the Roman Catholics were to be excluded solely on account of those sentiments, as much as the Catholics, from the highest elevations in the State, and from the greatest objects of ambition? . . . He felt bound honestly to tell his Majesty, in plain terms, that the substantive power of First Minister he must have, and what is more, must be known to have."—STAPLETON, 'George Canning and His Times,' pp. 585, 586.

† Peel does not appear to have thought of himself as Premier, deferring to Canning's prior claims:—"I certainly did say to his Majesty," he writes to Lord Eldon, "that I could not advise the attempt to form an

Premier. As the Duke had done all in his power to baffle Canning's system of foreign policy, it is needless to say that this proposal fell to the ground. On the other hand, a suggestion of Canning's that Mr. Frederick Robinson should be made First Lord of the Treasury, while he himself acted as First Minister, was not less unsuccessful. In this way two months were passed in an alternation of letters which answered no useful purpose, and interviews which settled nothing, with the broad result that Canning would not serve under Peel, and that Peel declined to serve under Canning.*

Compelled to choose between the two, the King chose Canning, as from the first he had evidently wished to do; and commissioned him on the 10th to attempt a reconstruction of the Ministry. He immediately communicated with his former colleagues, announcing his intention to uphold the principles on which Lord Liverpool's Government had been conducted. Favourable answers were returned by Frederick Robinson, Lord Bexley, Lord Harrowby, Huskisson, and Charles Wynn; but the Duke of Wellington, Lords Eldon, Bathurst, Melville, and Westmoreland,

exclusive Protestant Government; that I could not be a party even to the attempt, should it be contemplated; but His Majesty was, I was confident, of the same opinion. I said also that I was out of the question as the head of a Government, under the management which I consider by far the best that could be made, namely, the re-construction of the late Administration; because it was quite impossible for Canning to acquiesce in my appointment."—Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii.

* A caustic sketch of the "situation," from the High Tory view-point is given by Christopher North (Professor Wilson), in the 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,' i. 372, 373.

and Mr. Peel, at once refused to join a Canning Ministry, and the Duke even resigned his post as Commander-in-Chief. There can be no doubt that by these concerted refusals, Peel and the Duke expected to render it impossible for Canning to form a permanent Administration, though the former may not have been unwilling that the Catholic question, the settlement of which could not be much longer obstructed, should be got out of the way. Having gained at last the highest reward of an English statesman's honourable ambition, Canning was not disposed to let it slip from his hands; and he proceeded to complete his Government by the introduction of comparatively fresh blood. Sir John Copley was raised to the peerage as Lord Lyndhurst, and made Lord Chancellor; Mr. Sturges Bourne became Home Secretary, and Lord Dudley, Foreign Secretary; Lord Palmerston, as Secretary-at-War, was admitted for the first time to the Cabinet. The Duke of Portland became Privy Seal. Canning's old colleagues retained their former offices, except that Mr. Robinson, created Lord Goderich, was removed to the Colonial Secretaryship. Canning himself doubled the Chancellorship of the Exchequer with the First Lordship of the Treasury. Such an Administration was strong in debating power, and certainly was not unfitted to confront the opposition of the Tory party; and Canning dexterously secured a considerable amount of external support by conferring the office of Lord High Admiral on the Duke of Clarence.

When Parliament met, the Tory hostility blazed out strongly, and manifested itself in various methods of

petty warfare. The ministerial explanations led to an unpleasant controversy between Canning and the Duke of Wellington, which prevented the latter's resumption of the command of the army. The force of circumstances, and perhaps the natural development of Canning's political views, led him to draw near to the moderate Whigs, and in the course of the summer, Tierney, Lord Carlisle, and Lord Lansdowne entered the Cabinet, as Master of the Mint, First Commissioner of Woods, and Home Secretary. Some further changes followed, by which Sturges Bourne took the Woods, Lord Carlisle the Privy Seal, the Duke of Portland retaining a seat in the Cabinet, but without office.*

* "The contest for the post of Prime Minister which took place upon Lord Liverpool's resignation was substantially a struggle for personal ascendancy. Mr. Canning advised the King to form an exclusively anti-Catholic Administration, believing such a government to be impossible, and also convinced that, if possible, it would be ruinous to the State. When he received from the King the answer which he expected, and was told that there was no wish to dispense with his services, he made conditions which were inconsistent with any other person being appointed Prime Minister. Mr. Canning would not consent to an anti-Catholic Prime Minister, because it was a proscription of his opinions in his person; Mr. Peel would not consent to a pro-Catholic Prime Minister, because it was inconsistent with the part which he had taken in the Catholic question and his position as Home Secretary. Neither of these two arguments could properly be reconciled with the doctrine of making the Catholic question an open question, to which nevertheless each of the leaders adhered, although Mr. Canning could urge, with truth, that if the Cabinet were to be strictly neutral on the Catholic question, it was a violation of the principles of neutrality to insist upon an anti-Catholic Prime Minister. It appears to us that if Mr. Peel believed in his own arguments on the Catholic question; if he really thought that the removal of the Catholic disabilities would be productive of the evils which he described; and that the existing system of exclusion ought to be permanently maintained as an integral part of the British Constitution; then he ought to have urged upon

the King the formation of an administration upon the principle of resistance to the Catholic claims, and to have himself offered to take a leading part in it. If, however, he had a lurking consciousness that his arguments were unsound, and his policy mischievous; and that a case of necessity for conceding the Catholic claims might speedily arise, then he ought, notwithstanding the eminence which he had achieved as an anti-Catholic leader, to have openly renounced his advocacy of a cause which he felt to be untenable."—Sir G. C. LEWIS, 'Administrations of Great Britain,' pp. 443, 444. It is impossible not to see that in Peel's conduct there was a good deal of vacillation, though perhaps he was not aware of it, or at least disguised it from himself by his skill in nice distinctions. Sir Walter Scott, however, writing in May, 1827, seems to us to have been scarcely justified in using such language as the following; so far, at least, as Peel was concerned:—"I do not believe that it was the question of Emancipation or any public question, which carried them [Peel and his colleagues] out. I believe the predominant motive in the bosom of every one of them was personal hostility to Canning, and that with more prudence, less arbitrary manners, and more attention to the feelings of his colleagues, he would have stepped *nem. con.* into the situation of Prime Minister, to which his eloquence and talent naturally point him out." We may admit, however, that combined with a personal hostility on the part of some, was a suspicion on the part of many, that Canning was inclining towards a more Liberal system of home administration than they were able to support. Sydney Smith, writing to Jeffrey, says (February, 1827):—"There is a great effort made by the High Tories to fling Canning overboard, but Peel is averse to try the experiment. But for this, it is supposed he would be dismissed. The alternative I take to be either Peel or Canning, bound hand, foot, and tongue. Lord Wellington openly declares Canning to be, from his indiscretion, unfit for office." The views of a contemporary onlooker are indicated by Mr. Greville (under date of May the 12th). "As soon as Canning had got the King's commission he began to negotiate, and the Whigs readily enough entered into negotiation. The friends of Ministers resigned one after another, and for some time it seemed very doubtful whether Canning would be able to form a Government at all. His first measure was, however, very judicious—that of appointing the Duke of Clarence Lord High Admiral—nothing served so much to disconcert his opponents. The negotiations went on (through the Duke of Devonshire) up to the end of the Easter recess, when Lord Lansdowne came to town, and after much delay it was announced that the Whigs would support the new Government, but that none of them would take office immedi-

The session of 1827 was brief and stormy. Its principal events were the defeat of the Government's Corn Bill in the House of Lords, the personal hostility of Peel and the Duke, and the inexplicable, or at least unjustifiable, opposition of Earl Grey.* Canning was doubtlessly glad

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ately. The places were all filled up, but the appointments were understood to be only provisional, and the Duke of Portland, Lord Dudley, and Sturges Bourne were considered to hold their offices until Lord Lansdowne, Lord Carlisle, and Tierney should join the Cabinet. With this arrangement Parliament met, and the rage which had been accumulating in the minds of the seceders soon burst forth in a furious attack on this provisional arrangement. The Whigs have nearly in a body joined Government, with the exception of Lord Grey in the House of Lords, who in a speech full of eloquence attacked Canning's political life and character, and announced his intention of remaining neuter." After recording, on the 3rd of June, the entrance of Tierney, Lansdowne, and Carlisle into the Cabinet, Greville adds:—"It is quite evident that the present state of affairs is far from satisfactory; the government is not established on a firm or secure basis, and the members of it are not altogether satisfied with each other or themselves."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 94–98. See also the 6th volume of the New Series of the Duke of Wellington's 'Despatches.' It is a moot question whether, if Canning had lived, he would have been able to keep his Cabinet afloat. We are disposed to think he would have succeeded, but he must have depended more and more largely upon Whig support, and the attacks of the Tory Opposition would have been incessant and severe (*a*). His difficulty would have been in the King's personal feeling upon the Catholic question. It is worth noticing that Canning's name is not associated with a single legislative measure of importance; and we may expect, therefore, that his fame will not be of long duration. Such as it is, it is based even now on the recollection of two or three great speeches and some clever squibs.

* "It is difficult to understand the motives which actuated Earl Grey, unless we assume that his pride was wounded by the little attention that

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(*a*) Lord Campbell however, says that, "even if Canning had lived, the combination against him would probably have been too strong to be resisted."—'Lives of the Chancellors,' viii. 54.

to prorogue Parliament, and obtain leisure to consider his position and adjust the plan of a future campaign (July the 2nd). At this time he was not in very robust health, having caught a serious cold at the funeral of the Duke of York in January, and having suffered considerably from the prolonged strain of the Ministerial interregnum and the exacerbated warfare directed against him in Parliament. But he recovered sufficiently to pay a visit to

had been paid to his opinions and wishes, or that he felt an aristocratic jealousy of the accession to power of one who had long been regarded as an adventurer. Either motive was unworthy of Lord Grey. That much might be said as to Canning's inconsistency is, of course, very true; but Lord Grey should have rejoiced that so powerful a mind had gradually relieved itself of its early prejudices, and showed a capacity of receiving newer and higher impressions. There seems good reason to believe that of all the attacks levelled at Canning, this was felt most deeply. "A more striking and mournful instance can hardly be found of the effect of prejudice in blinding one great man to the merits,—even to the most familiar attributes,—of another. Lord Grey had soon occasion to show how well he could bear misconstruction and rancour; but if anything could have shaken his firmness in his own hour of the ordeal, it must have been the remembrance of this fatal attack on Canning,—so insolent, hard, and cold, so insulting and so cruel! As might be expected from the state of mind which produced it, the speech was full of misconstructions and mistakes. As far as its matter was concerned, nothing could have been easier than to answer it; but the question was how? The practice of answering in one House the personal attacks made in another, is radically objectionable; and Mr. Canning had the greatest reluctance to have recourse to this apparently only method; and besides, he was not in a state of health which would have borne him through such an exertion. He believed that ere long [by his elevation to the peerage] he should be able to reply to Lord Grey in person, but they never met more. Lord Grey's political friends, now the allies of the Minister, did full justice to Mr. Canning's character in the Upper House; but this particular speech was never efficiently answered, and the thought of it rankled in the breast of the victim to the last."—'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' i. 442, 443.

the King, at the close of the month, in his retirement at Windsor. On the 31st he attended the Foreign Office,—as it proved, for the last time,—returning to his Chiswick residence* in the afternoon.† His secretary observed that he appeared very languid, and that he looked "dreadfully ill." On the 2nd of August Sir William Knighton called, and was so struck with his state that he ordered two eminent physicians, Dr. Holland and Dr. Farre, to be summoned. The malady, however, made rapid progress, and he was declared to be in great and imminent danger. On Sunday, the 3rd, the doctors deemed it advisable to issue a bulletin, announcing his serious condition. In the forenoon he proposed that his daughter should read the prayers to him, but as his mind began to wander, this was not done. In the

* The Duke of Devonshire had placed his villa at Chiswick at Mr. Canning's disposal.

† A few days after Parliament had been prorogued, Mr. Canning dined with Lord Lyndhurst at Wimbledon, and after heating himself by a rapid walk, sat down under a tree to rest. The consequence was a feverish cold and an attack of rheumatism. On the 18th, Huskisson, who was also in feeble health, called to take leave of him before going on the Continent. He found him in bed, and looking so wan and ill that he could not help remarking that Canning seemed more in need of change and relaxation than himself; to which the Minister replied, "Oh! it is only the reflection of the yellow linings of the curtains." Two days later, Canning removed to the Duke of Devonshire's villa at Chiswick, where Fox spent his last days, and occupied the very room in which Fox died. He did not grow stronger, but attended to business regularly, and on the 25th dined with Lord Clanricarde. On the 30th he had his last interview with the King, who was so shocked by his appearance that he sent Sir William Knighton to him. Some friends dined with him on the 31st. He retired early to the bed which he was never more to leave again alive. His illness developed into inflammation of the bowels, and his sufferings were terrible. Shortly before his death, mortification supervened.

course of the day he asked for his secretary; and in reply to an inquiry whether he felt better, said, "Yes, very little; but if all the pain which I have suffered throughout my life were collected together, it would not amount to the one-hundredth part of the pain which I have suffered these last three days." When the physicians saw him in the evening he was in great agony, and exclaimed, "My God! My God!" Dr. Farre observed: "You do right, sir, to call upon your God. I hope that you pray to Him yourself in secret." "I do, I do," was his answer. "You ask," continued the physician, "for mercy and salvation, through the merits of your Redeemer?" "Yes," he replied, "I do, through the merits of Jesus Christ." The doctor then inquired if he had anything to say about public affairs; but, lest it should excite him, the question was not pressed. In the course of the evening he said to Sir William Knighton, "This may be hard upon me, but it is still harder upon the King."

During the next three days the Minister continued to sink, and on the 8th he died;* passing away so quietly

* From the *Morning Post* of August 9th, 1827, we extract the following 'bulletins and notices:'—

"Chiswick, Wednesday afternoon.

"The symptoms of Mr. Canning's illness towards one o'clock yesterday afternoon assumed a more decided crisis than hitherto, and it was ascertained that mortification had taken place in the region of the left side, which appeared greatly to extend; notwithstanding some intervals of sleep, his medical attendants perceived that he was gradually sinking under the effects of the malady, and towards evening the lassitude and weakness produced by the mortification became more manifest, and Mr. Canning wandered occasionally in mind. But his powers altogether were gradually departing, and the extremities were weakening more and more,

that the exact moment could not be ascertained, but it was between twelve and ten minutes before four in the morning.* He had won the great prize of his ambition, the object of his struggles and aspirations; but had not enjoyed it long enough to furnish us with

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and losing all perceivable life or motion. . . . Mr. Canning during the early part of the night had interviews with Mrs. Canning, his son, and daughter; he had nearly lost the power of speech, but was in full possession of his faculties . . . About three o'clock the state of the Right Hon. Gentleman became more critical, and his death was momentarily expected. During the last hour Mr. Canning had been altogether free from pain, and had been in a state of excessive drowsiness or stupor, from which he could not be aroused. The Right Hon. Gentleman's son-in-law, the Marquis of Clanricarde, and Mr. Stapleton, who has for many years been his private secretary, were the only individuals, except his medical attendants, who were present at that distressing moment. Shortly after midnight, he sunk rapidly from exhaustion, and a few minutes before four o'clock this morning, without a sigh and apparently without a pain, he gently breathed his last. The malady which produced this distinguished gentleman's decease, was an inflammation of the intestines, which could not be checked in time to arrest the mortification."

In the *Times* of the same day occur the following particulars:—

"The faint hopes which even the least sanguine of those who watched the sufferings of Mr. Canning cherished, during the early part of yesterday, in consequence of the manner in which he had rallied, gradually vanished as the day advanced, and towards evening it became certain that the closing scene was at hand. Mrs. Canning was with him throughout the night; and towards morning about ten minutes before his dissolution became so overpowered by a few broken sentences addressed at intervals to her by Mr. Canning, that she fainted, and was removed insensible from the room. She had scarcely quitted it, when her husband, whose energies rallied for an instant, suddenly relaxed, stupefaction ensued, and he died without a struggle."

* Stapleton, 'George Canning and His Times,' pp. 603, 605.

adequate materials for a satisfactory reply to the question, What would he have done with it? *

We may bring together here, a few details of a personal character.†. In illustration of the great energy

* Mr. Albany Fonblanque writes:—"On Canning's genius it is unnecessary for us now to dissert: our opinion of it has been sufficiently often expressed. He was the last of the Rhetoricians. Had he been a less orator, he would probably have been a greater man. He followed, however, the tawdry fashion of his day; and his tinsel and finery could not disguise the thews and sinews they encumbered. Self-complacency was a prominent feature of his character, and the nice description, *Omnium quæ dixerat feceratque arte quadam ostentator*, was peculiarly applicable to him. But if ever vanity was excusable in man, it was excusable in George Canning, who, endowed with every choicest gift of nature, had risen from a low condition to the highest office in the state, and soon centered in himself the best hopes of the best men in the civilized world. We read in the tales of superstition of men who have made compacts with the fiend. A Faustus could hardly have desired to be more than a Canning. A fine person for the love of woman; a mind for the admiration of man; a golden tide of fortune, which had its slacks indeed, but no ebb; and a death which has abruptly left his character as it was gilded with the glow of a world's best hopes."—'England under Seven Administrations,' iii. 44, 45.

† Mr. Hallam once told Mr. George Ticknor, the American *littérateur*, a story in illustration of what he called Canning's "occasional unwillingness to devote himself to business." To us it seems rather a proof that his old love of fun and boyishness of spirit prevailed with him to the last. "The principal person in the management of Indian affairs—who related the fact to Hallam—had occasion once to press Mr. Canning, as Premier, for several weeks (?), to look over and determine some matters quite important to the condition of India. The business was disagreeable, and Canning disliked to touch it, though the delay was becoming injurious to the service. At last, much urged, he promised to come to the proper office, on a certain evening, and finish the business. He came, but said he hated the whole thing, that he had come only because he had given his word; and then, turning suddenly on the Secretary, "Now, if you will let me off from this business to night, I will treat you to Astley's.' The Secretary saw it was idle to

and facility of his intellect, the following anecdote is told:

"Whilst staying at Mr. Charles Ellis's at Seaford, in 1825, Mr. Canning having left the breakfast-room, one of his staff mentioned that Napoleon was in the habit of dictating to three secretaries at once. Some of the party expressed strong doubts as to the possibility of such an effort of the mind. In a few minutes his usual staff left the breakfast-room for the working-room. It was *impossible* that Mr. Canning could have heard what had just passed. But, curiously enough, that very morning he desired first one, then another, and then a third of his secretaries to "*crook* a sheet of paper," by which he meant double it in two; and he proceeded to dictate three long despatches, and kept each of us writing as fast as we could write. His doing so, was a very curious coincidence, being unprecedented, but it proved the possibility to the doubters."

This anecdote would seem to be an exaggeration of one recorded by Mr. Greville,* who remarks that Mr. Canning could not bear to dictate, because nobody could write fast enough for him; but, on one occasion, he adds, when he had the gout in his hand and could not write, he stood by the fire and dictated at the same

do, or to attempt to do, anything like serious work with the Premier while in such a humour, and accepted the invitation to the Amphitheatre, leaving India to suffer till Canning's sense of duty should make him industrious."—'Life and Letters of George Ticknor,' ii. 150, 151. We suspect that this incident occurred, not when Mr. Canning was Premier, but when he was President of the Board of Control.

* C. C. Greville, 'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 107.

time a despatch on Greek affairs to [Lord] George Bentinck, and one on South American politics to [Lord] Howard de Walden, each writing as fast as he could, while he turned from one to the other without hesitation or embarrassment.

According to the same authority, Canning concealed nothing from Mrs. Canning, nor from Charles Ellis. When absent from his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, he wrote everything to her in the greatest detail. His industry was so great, that he left not a moment unemployed; while such was the clearness of his mind, that he could address himself almost simultaneously to several different subjects with perfect precision and without the least embarrassment. He wrote very fast, but not fast enough for his mental activity, composing much more quickly than he could commit his ideas to paper.

Mr. Greville has also preserved some remarks made by the Duke of Wellington on the statesman whom he loved so little. He said, "His talents were astonishing, his compositions admirable; that he possessed the art of saying exactly what was necessary, and of passing over those topics on which it was not advisable to touch; [that] his fertility and resources [were] inexhaustible." He considered him, "the finest speaker he had ever heard; though he prided himself extremely upon his compositions, he would patiently endure any criticisms upon such papers as he submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet, and would allow them to be altered in any way that was suggested." *

* Lord Althorp's opinion of Canning is preserved by Haydon, who, in his Diary, under the date of November 17th, 1833, writes:—"We talked

He imparted something of the vivacity of his disposition and the sportiveness of his fancy into his despatches. In a letter to Sir Charles Bagot, the British Ambassador at the Hague, he says:—"You will perceive that F. is *cantankerous*. I told you (I think) some time ago that he is also tricky. No man has a right to be both. In trickery, nothing so much becomes a man as humility. Straightforwardness is the only excuse for *cantanker*." In a letter to Lord Granville, late ambassador at Paris, he anticipates a well-known maxim of Lord Melbourne's:—"Oh! that people would learn that doing nothing is as often a *measure*, and full as important a one as the most diligent activity; and that clever people would reconcile it to themselves to own, that they have no instructions when they really have none!" The first Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, whom Canning persisted in designating "the phat Duke," in allusion to his corpulency, having found fault with the man-of-war commissioned by the Admiralty to take out a new Governor-General to India, Lord Morley communicated his objection to Canning. He replied:—"I am much obliged to you for your report of the D. of B.'s. caution respecting the *Jupiter*.

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of Canning. I said, "Do you think Canning would have stopped Reform?' 'No,' said Lord Althorp, 'he might have postponed it. H could not have stopped it.' I said, 'What do you think of Canning?' 'A man of splendid talents, who would have been steady when he had realised his ambition by getting to the top,' said Lord Althorp. I remarked, 'He was not to be depended on.' He assented. I then said, 'He was haughty to his inferiors.' 'He was silent in general company,' said Lord Althorp."—'Life of B. R. Haydon,' ii. 348.

Could you have the experiment made *without* the D. of B. on board, as that *might* make a difference?" The metrical despatch which he addressed to Sir Charles Bagot, in 1826, when irritated by the dilatoriness and unfairness of the Dutch in a commercial negotiation, has been often quoted:—

"In matters of commerce, the fault of the Dutch,
Is giving too little and asking too much:
With equal advantage the French are content,
So we'll clap on Dutch bottoms a twenty per cent.,
Twenty per cent.,
Twenty per cent.,
Nous frapperons Falck with twenty per cent."

Falck was the Dutch minister. With what a sense of freshness must these sallies of good humour have come upon the veterans of diplomacy!

Professor Wilson speaks of Canning as "one of the wittiest men of the day"; ranking him with Jeffrey and Sydney Smith. He speaks of his wit as infallible. "It is never out of time or place," he remarks,* "and is finely proportioned to its object. Has he a good-natured, gentlemanly, well-educated blockhead—say of the landed interest—to make ridiculous, he does it so pleasantly that the Esquire joins in the general smile. Is it a coarse calculating dunce of the mercantile school, he suddenly hits him such a blow on the organ of number, that the stunned economist is unable to sum up the total of the whole. Would some pert prig of the profession be facetious overmuch, Canning ventures to the very borders of vulgarity, and

* Professor Wilson, 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,' i. 155.

discomfits him with an old Joe. Doth some mouthing member of mediocrity sport orator, and make use of a dead tongue? Then the classical Secretary runs him through and through with apt quotations, and before the member feels himself wounded, the whole House sees that he is a dead man."

A very fine character of Mr. Canning was contributed to the 'Keepsake' of 1828, by one well fitted to judge him generously and yet not inaccurately, Sir James Mackintosh.* He speaks of him as in social intercourse delightful.† His manner was neither disputatious, declamatory, nor sententious; he was neither a dictator nor a jester. His manner was simple and unobtrusive, his language familiar. His pleasantry was almost always exempt from that alloy of taunt and banter which sometimes entered into it in the heat of public debate. While he was much more easily pleased in society than might have been expected from the keenness of his discernment, and the sensibility of his temper, he was liable to be discomposed, or even silenced, by the presence of a person whom he disliked. He could not conceal at any time the political vexations or anxieties which preyed on his mind; nor his sensitiveness to public attacks, which their frequency wears out in most English politicians.

The most flourishing period of our Parliamentary

* It is reprinted in Sir J. Mackintosh's 'Miscellaneous Works,' (edit. 1846), ii. 455–464.

† Some graphic descriptions of Canning's home life and social qualities occur in Rush, the American Minister's, 'Journal of a Residence at the Court of London,' 1st Series.

eloquence, according to Mackintosh, extends over about half a century, from the maturity of Lord Chatham's genius to the death of Mr. Fox. During the twenty years which succeeded, Mr. Canning was sometimes the leader, and always the greatest orator, of the party who supported the Administration; in which there were able men who supported, without rivalling him, against opponents also not thought by him inconsiderable. Of these last, one, at least [Brougham], was felt by every hearer, and acknowledged in private by himself, to have always forced his faculties to their very uttermost stretch. Among English orators, Mr. Canning seems to have been the best model of the adorned style. In some respects he surpassed Mr. Pitt. His diction was more various, sometimes more simple; more idiomatical, even in its more elevated parts. It sparkled with imagery, and was brightened by illustration; in both of which Mr. Pitt, for so great an orator, was defective.

Sir James Mackintosh, as might be expected, does full justice to Canning's keen and brilliant wit, by which he gained so many triumphs, and provoked so much enmity. "In sudden flashes of wit, and in the playful description of men or things, he was often distinguished by that natural felicity which is the charm of pleasantry; to which the air of art and labour is more fatal than to any other talent. His exuberance of fancy and wit lessened the gravity of his general manner, and perhaps also indisposed the audience to feel his earnestness when it clearly showed itself. In that important quality he was inferior to Mr. Pitt,—

> "Deep on whose front engraven,
> Deliberation sat, and public care;"

and no less inferior to Mr. Fox, whose fervid eloquence flowed from the love of his country, the scorn of baseness, and the hatred of cruelty, which were the ruling passions of his nature."

His only known writings in prose are State Papers, which attract attention by their lucidity of method, cogency of reasoning, and precision of language. His faculty of writing verse, was that which belonged to a cultivated rather than an original mind. His serious efforts are not marked by any particular merit; but his lighter compositions, and his political satires, if inferior, in some respects, to those of General Fitzpatrick, Moore, or Frere, have a value and a character of their own.

Sir James Mackintosh concludes by saying that "he was a man of fine and brilliant genius, of warm affections, of a high and generous spirit,—a statesman who, at home, converted most of his opponents into warm supporters; who abroad, was the sole hope and trust of all who sought an orderly and legal liberty; and who was cut off in the midst of vigorous and splendid measures, which, if executed by himself, or with his own spirit, promised to place his name in the first-class of rulers, among the founders of lasting peace, and the guardians of human improvement."*

* In her 'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' Miss Martineau has pronounced a glowing eulogium upon Canning:—

"For some few days before his death," she says, "the nation had been on the watch in fearful apprehension of the news; but yet the consternation was as great as if this man had been supposed immortal. Multitudes felt that the life most important to the world of the whole existing generation had passed away. It was a life in which men had put their trust,—(more trust than should perhaps be put in any life),—from the Isles

of Greece to the ridges of the Andes. When those who had by their persecution sapped that life now awoke to a sense of its importance, they must have been amazed at themselves that they could have indulged spleen and passion in such a case, and have gratified their own prejudices and tempers at so fatal a cost . . . All the honour that could be given now was given. All the political coteries, the whole country, the whole continent, the whole world echoed with eulogy of the departed statesman. From the most superficial and narrow-minded of his critics, who could comprehend nothing beyond the charm which invested the man, to the worthiest of his appreciators who were sensible of the grandeur of his intellect and the nobility of his soul, all now joined in grief and in praise; and none with a more painful wringing of the heart than those who had but lately learned his greatness, and the promise that it bore."

After remarking that it would be a curious speculation what Mr. Canning would finally have been and have done, if the great European war had lasted to the end of his life, Miss Martineau continues that, in her eyes, his glory is mainly that he was the Minister of the Peace. On which we may remark, that his fame really rests upon the five years of his Foreign Secretaryship, from 1822 to 1827.

"One of the strongest evidences of his power," she says, "is the different light in which he appeared to the men about him and to us. His accomplishments were so brilliant, his graces so exquisite, his wit so dazzling, that all observers were completely occupied by these, so as to be almost insensible to the qualities of mind which are most impressive to us who never saw his face. To us he is, as Lord Holland called him, 'the first logician in Europe.' To us he is the thoughtful, calm, earnest, quiet statesman, sending forth from his office the most simple and business-like despatches, as free from pomp and noise as if they were a message from some pure intelligence. We believe and know all that can be told of his sensibility, his mirth, and the passion of his nature; and we see no reason for doubting it, as, in genius of a high order—in Fox, for instance,—the logic and the sensibility are so intimately united, that in proportion as the emotions kindle and glow, the reason distils a purer and yet purer truth. But to us, to whom the fire is out, there remains the essence; and by that we judge him. We hear of his enthusiasms, kindling easily at all times, but especially on the apprehension of great ideas: but what we see, is that no favourite ideas led him away from a steady regard to the realities of his time. We hear of his unquenchable fancy; but we see that it never beguiled him from taking a statesman-like view of the society spread out below him, and waiting upon his administration of the powers

of the government. He was one of the most practical of statesmen; and herein lay one of the most indisputable evidences of his genius."

After an allusion to his faults, such as the self-confidence and the love of enterprise or adventure, which, in his earlier career, made him too ready to spring, like an athlete, into the political arena,—the spirit of contempt which led him to pour out the most lavish ridicule on things and persons sometimes not unworthy of better treatment,—the inconsistency, or subservience to party, or waywardness of judgment, which induced him to oppose the reform of Parliament and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, for which his conscience cannot have been able to find excuse, our author adds:—"As for all the rest of him, he was worthy of his endowments, and his great function in life. He was an excellent son to his humble mother, who died happily for herself before him,—in March of the same year. He was nearly as large an object in the mental vision of all the leading men of his time as in that of his proud mother, or of his adoring family and private friends. His mind and his name did indeed occupy a great space in the world, from the year 1822 till his death: and when he was gone, there was a general sense of forlornness throughout the nation, which made the thoughtful ponder how such dismay could be caused by the withdrawal of one from amidst its multitude of men."—HARRIET MARTINEAU, 'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' i. 445–448.

A writer of a different calibre and different tendencies, Sir Archibald Alison, says:—"Mr. Canning's talents, both for business and debate, were of the very first order. Like all other men gifted with the highest class of intellect, his was capable of application at will to any subject; and the man whose eloquence and play of fancy had so often charmed and enchained the House of Commons, was equally felicitous when he came to discuss the details of finance or the corn averages, as Chancellor of the Exchequer or leader of the House of Commons. But though his powers were thus capable of various application, his disposition led him to the realms of imagination; his longing was to the world of fancy more than the world of reality: he was fitted by nature to have been a great author, rather than a great statesman." This we venture to doubt. Nothing in Canning's compositions indicates the stuff out of which great writers are made; though as a wit and satirist he could unquestionably have earned distinction. "If the brevity of his career as Minister gave him few opportunities of engraving his acts in indelible characters on the annals of his country, he made good use of the short time that was allotted to him, and has left a name second to none, in point of brilliancy, of all the statesmen who ever guided the destinies of England."

In the *Times* of August 9th, 1827, appeared a striking article upon the deceased statesman :—

"The late Prime Minister is the last of five, who may be said to have perished at their posts, within the last 22 years—all, with the exception of Mr. Perceval, sinking under the toils and cares of office, or under vexations incidental to it, and operating on already shattered constitutions. The names of Pitt, Fox, Liverpool and Canning are warnings to political ambition in this country, of the end which too often betides it.

In the prompt and sensitive excitability of Mr. Canning, may be traced the impediments which retarded his final success, and which more than once threatened to frustrate his most aspiring efforts. If Mr. Canning could have subdued for a while the indignation under which he wrought against Lord Castlereagh, by means which afforded his personal enemies a pretext for representing him, though falsely, as an intriguer, the feelings of the other members of the Portland Cabinet would have co-operated with him and with the public voice, and have expelled, with something like contempt, from office, the incompetent author and director of the ruinous Walcheren expedition. The issue of this indiscreet quarrel with Lord Castlereagh was, their simultaneous loss of office, and Mr. Canning's long exclusion. The more plausible and measured temperament of Mr. Canning's adversary introduced him again to power, under Mr. Perceval, in the Department of Foreign Affairs, in which situation he had the good fortune to inflict on Mr. Canning the deep disgrace of an over-paid and unnecessary embassy to Lisbon. This was the real blot on Mr. Canning's political emblazonment, one, indeed, which we are ready to acknowledge that a series of illustrious services have long since compensated and redeemed, if they have not entirely obliterated, but which the faith and moral use of history impose upon us the reluctant duty of here affixing to the name of Mr. Canning.

That the earlier portions of this statesman's life exhibited no evidence compared with that which has flowed from every week and hour of its more recent progress, on which could be established any of Mr. Canning's now indefeasible claims to the reputation of a friend of human liberty, may be accounted for, by the subaltern order of those duties which, until within these three years, and since the overthrow of Bonaparte he had been called upon to discharge. An exception of course will be made for the time during which he filled a cabinet office under Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Portland; but then the great interests of the war swallowed up all questions on which might hinge the fame of a statesman for his free or despotic

principles: so that it was not until his acceptance of the post of Foreign Minister, after the self-destruction of Lord Londonderry, that Mr. Canning had at once the forces wherewith to act, and a field on which to display them.

Try the departed statesman by a test like this, and then let every Englishman determine how much he gained by Lord Londonderry's death, and what he has lost in Mr. Canning's!

England was disengaged from the trammels of the Holy Alliance, almost before the familiars of that body could look round them and discover the hand which set her free.

An invasion of Spain, which no reasoning could palliate, was rendered, by Mr. Canning's dexterity and spirit, little more noxious in its result than it was defensible in its origin; and the world saw contrasted an outrage by France upon the Spaniards, which will bring about its own termination and punishment, with a blessing conferred by England on the Americans, which is at once its own guarantee and reward.

Constitutional Portugal has been upheld against the invasion of the house of Bourbon, by diplomatic skill and military energy, so directed, disposed and justified, as to protect according to all reasonable calculation, the civil rights of the people of that kingdom, through the same means and on the same political and international obligations which Mr. Canning has made subservient to the independence of King Pedro's crown.

The spirit through which the whole South of Europe must one day vindicate the liberties which belong to man, has been, though not ostentatiously encouraged, kept alive and ready for seasonable exercise, by the mere notoriety that Mr. Canning was Minister of Great Britain.

At home, whatever has been attempted by his government, has been attempted well, though, thanks to his enemies and those of the people of England it has not been so well accomplished. The principles which he would have realised, had life and power been granted, were those under which the poor man's food would have been increased, and the national expenses economized; of the ornaments and accessories of the deceased Minister, whether as a member of the Senate or of Society, it is not strictly our design to speak. His eloquence—that much and dangerously overvalued art in England—his eloquence was perfect in its peculiar kind. In our minds Canning was not the foremost, though among the foremost, of contemporary speakers. Brougham is more sarcastic, more impetuous, more fruitful, and discursive. Plunkett more logical, forcible and impressive. Nowhere does there now exist the profound, the terrible, or the sublime.

In private life, and its endearing and sacred relations, Mr. Canning bears the repute of having been an estimable and exemplary person. Sooner or later, even in this world, justice is rendered to us before we die. Let the respective partisans of Canning and Londonderry now meditate for a moment the place which each of these Ministers of the same kingdom fills in the heart of the people. The memory of the one is embalmed by his countrymen in unaffected sorrow; the remains of the other were loaded with execrations and pelted with ordure at the grave."

BOOK VII.

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

A.D. 1788–1848.

[The materials for the following sketch have been gathered from a variety of sources, among which we may name *Memoirs of the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel,* edited by Earl Stanhope and Lord Cardwell; *The Political Life of Sir Robert Peel,* by Thomas Doubleday; *Sir Robert Peel, his Life and Character,* by Sir Lawrence Peel; The New Series of the Duke of Wellington's *Despatches; The Greville Memoirs;* T. Raikes, *Journal from* 1831 *to* 1847; Theodore Martin, *Life of H. R. H. the Prince Consort;* W. M. Torrens, *Life of William 2nd Viscount Melbourne;* Sir H. L. Bulwer (Lord Dalling) and Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Viscount Palmerston;* Earl Russell, *Selections from Speeches,* 1817 *to* 1841; Field's *Life of George Ticknor;* Harriet Martineau, *History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace;* Sir Archibald Alison, *History of England from* 1815 *to* 1852; Rev. W. N. Molesworth, *History of England from the Year* 1830; Lieut. the Hon. A. Grey, *Life of Charles, Earl Grey;* A. Hayward, *Diaries of a Lady of Quality;* The Right Hon. B. Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield), *Life of Lord George Bentinck;* Macknight, *Political and Literary Biography of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli,* etc. etc. Reference has also been made to *Hansard,* the *Times,* the *Spectator,* and other journals.]

Born February 5, 1788
Enters Parliament, 1809
Under-Secretary of the Colonies, 1811
Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1812
Elected for Oxford University, 1818
Resigns the Irish Secretaryship, 1818
Carries the Cash Payments Act, 1819
Married June 8, 1820
Home Secretary, 1822
Resigns office, 1827
Home Secretary again, 1828
Carries Catholic Emancipation, 1829
Resigns office, 1830
Elected for Tamworth, 1833
First Lord of the Treasury, 1834
Resigns, 1835
First Lord of the Treasury a second time, 1841
Proposes his Sliding Scale, 1842
Carries his Financial Reforms, 1842
Repeals the Corn Laws, 1846
Retires from office, 1846
His death July 2, 1850

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

A.D. 1788–1848.

I.

WHATEVER might have been the case thirty years ago, when the grave so unexpectedly closed over the dust of Sir Robert Peel, no one now will question his right to be included in the first rank of English Statesmen. That there will always remain much in his career, and something in his character, on which an adverse critic may comment with considerable success, is beyond doubt; but this will not affect the general estimate of his brilliant political capacity, nor detract from the value of the services which he rendered to his country. It is easy to point to remarkable contradictions of conduct and opinion; to dwell on the fact that the politician who opposed Catholic Emancipation, and defended the Corn Laws, was the Minister who granted the one and repealed the other. Not only, however, have we no right to expect perfect consistency in our statesmen; but it may safely be asserted that such consistency is not necessarily an element of true statesmanship. Men like Lord Eldon, with "Non possumus" for their watch-

word, may die in the political faith which cradled them, without injury to themselves or the State. But men like Peel must grow with the growth of their times; must learn to put off, when the public good requires it, the traditions they inherited, the prejudices which they imbibed as their earliest lessons. All that we are entitled to ask from them is fidelity to certain leading principles of truth, justice, and honour, and a maintenance of party ties when not incompatible with the observance of those principles. It is always a severe trial to a public leader when he is called upon to reverse the action of his former life, to attack that which he once defended, to pull down that which he once helped to erect or adorn. It is a trial that brings with it many a sharp wrench, many a bitter pang; and if the public gain, it is at the individual's loss. The statesman who, for conscience' sake, undergoes an ordeal of this description, may reasonably demand the lenient judgment of his contemporaries and of posterity. We do not allude to tergiversations for the sake of place, or the vacillations of uncertain minds, which change with each fresh influence brought to bear upon them; but to the slow and painful surrender of once cherished convictions when larger experience and greater light have shown them to be erroneous. No unprejudiced observer will doubt that to this category belonged Sir Robert Peel's abandonment of his old attitude on the Corn Law Question.

It is a favourite pastime with biographers to institute parallels between their heroes and other illustrious men. In the case of Peel it is easier to establish a contrast.

Compared with his rival and colleague, Canning, for instance, the points of difference are many and startling. Peel was as cold, equable, and reserved, as Canning was warm, impulsive, and indiscreet. He could feel, and feel deeply; but he kept his feelings under proud control. Canning went through public life with his heart upon his sleeve; Peel studiously imposed a stern silence upon himself, and seemed to wear an impassible mask. Canning revelled in the graces of an airy fancy and the vivacities of a copious wit; Peel had no sense of humour, no epigrammatic capacity; his sarcasm was clumsy, his satire elephantine. Yet while Canning made many friends and few followers, Peel, if he gained few friends, rallied round him a great party. This was due to his possession of certain qualities, in which Canning, with all his genius, was deficient; this was due to his discretion, his even temper, his clear judgment, his admirable common sense. There was as great a contrast in the lives of the two statesmen as in their characters. Canning's was one of "storm and stress"; a life of conflict, fire, and passion; a life of little achievement, but of much unfulfilled promise. He gained the highest prize which can fall to an English public man's ambition, to let it drop almost immediately from his death-cold hands. No great legislative measure preserves his name on the Statute Book. On the other hand, Peel accomplished all that he ever undertook. His career was not without its shadows, not without its hours of battle; but, on the whole, it was an eminently prosperous career. For a long period he was at the head of a formidable party;

he held for years the post of First Minister of the Crown. He lived to associate his name with some of the greatest reforms of the century. At one time, speaking in the House of Commons, he said:—"If I exercise power, it shall be upon my conception—perhaps imperfect, perhaps mistaken—but yet my sincere conception of public duty." Posterity has since decided that he *did* exercise power in this noble and disinterested spirit; and that he attained to it by no unworthy means and by no sacrifice of principle or motive.

It would not be impossible to trace a resemblance between him and Walpole, whom, as we have seen in our memoir of the latter statesman, he thoroughly appreciated. He was a greater *man* than Walpole; a man of purer life and more refined taste and higher conception of duty; but he was not a greater Minister. He resembled him in his love of peace, in his financial skill, in his successful management of the House of Commons. He resembled him in his admirable composure, his caution, and his capability of bold measures when boldness was absolutely needed. Even in their oratory a similitude may be detected. They had the same power of clear and cogent exposition, the same mastery over details, the same quickness in detecting fallacies, the same facility for ready and forcible argument. Peel, however, had livelier sympathies and a more impressionable temperament than Walpole, and, consequently, he more frequently rose to eloquence. There was often a glow, a fervour, a generosity in his speeches which we do not find in those of the great Minister of the first two Georges.

Robert Peel was, emphatically, a middle-class Minister. None of his predecessors were so thoroughly imbued with the feelings and sentiments of the middle classes. In this lay both his strength and his weakness; the breadth of his home, and the narrowness of his foreign policy. Pitt, Burke, Canning, sprang like him from the middle classes; but each was of distinctly aristocratic tendencies, and those tendencies coloured their views of policy and influenced their action. Hence it was that their patriotism held an apparently loftier tone and a wider scope; that they formed a higher estimate of British interests; that they desired for their country a supreme place in the European council. Peel's ideal of government was eminently pacific. It concerned almost exclusively the condition of the English people. He cared little for the balance of power or imperial aggrandisement. He wished the poor to be better fed, better clothed, more prosperous and contented. He desired to make England the centre of the world's commerce, and to cover the seas with her commercial navies. He wished to maintain the old institutions, though never unwilling to improve them; and he cherished a profound antipathy to everything sensational. Perhaps he did not take sufficient account of the fact that nations cannot live by bread alone; that it is necessary at times to appeal to their more generous impulses and to awaken their purer aspirations. Yet on the whole, his system of administration was well adapted to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number, to dispel class-jealousies, and to reconcile the various interests of a busy and energetic people.

Peel has been deservedly praised for his sagacity. He saw clearly, though he did not see far. He could thoroughly appreciate whatever lay within the range of his vision; but his want of imagination prevented him from computing the issues of the future. He had an intellect exactly fitted to grasp details, and group them together with infallible accuracy; but the bolder outlines of the picture generally escaped him. The valleys and the plains were his own; but his eyes did not reach the sunlit mountain-peaks. Take him all in all, he was emphatically a silent man; but his silence was the silence of reflection passing into resolution,—not like that of Napoleon the Third, the silence of doubt and hesitation. No man could be more courageous when the crisis required courage. No man more determined to carry out his purpose when that purpose was once formed. This firm will, this intrepid courage, and his wonderful faculty of patience explain the great successes of his parliamentary life. Nor must we omit to take notice of his honesty. He never hesitated to avow a change of opinion, and to act upon it, whatever might be the charges, the reproaches, the calumnies to which he thereby exposed himself. This statement will appear astonishing to readers who are accustomed to think of him as "the apostle of expediency," and to believe the parrot-cry of unfriendly politicians, that his life was one great enigma; but it expresses our deliberate opinion after a careful study of his career. He was cradled and nursed in the most rigorous Toryism, but experience and study released him from bondage, and

thenceforward he acted as a Conservative, whose conservatism admits an infusion of liberal principles. He did not resist change absolutely and from a fixed standpoint; but he accepted it slowly, and only after he had convinced himself that it was necessary and advantageous, not for himself or his party, but for his country. Many politicians identify their party and its interests with the country and its interests; but this Peel never did. Party was with him a means and not an end. So his consistency was complete as regarded his devotion to the public welfare, and what he honestly thought to be conducive to it. It was imperfect only as regarded the prospects or prejudices of his party. As regarded the national interests, he was consistent in granting Catholic Emancipation and repealing the Corn Laws; as regarded Toryism and its advocates, he was inconsistent. But in sacrificing the lesser to the greater, he showed that he was a something better than the ordinary politician. Let us remember his own proud hope, as expressed in the last speech he made as a Minister, and admit that it was the hope—which Time has amply fulfilled—of a man who had mastered the truest and highest secrets of the truest and highest statecraft:—"I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit: but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter

because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice." *

* Writing in 1848, Miss Martineau says of Peel:—"From that time [the passing of the Catholic Relief Act] his expansion and advancement have been very remarkable. His mind and heart have kindled with an enthusiasm of which he was, twenty years ago, supposed unsusceptible; an enthusiasm of popular sympathy, and in favour of a pervasive justice. The union of this liberal sympathy with former habits of political conduct has made him a statesman precisely adapted to his age;—to serve his country and his time, though not to reap the immediate rewards of popularity, or adequate gratitude. . . . We have not any other man of equal qualifications. We cannot have one of a more unquestionable disinterestedness; and Peel stands pronounced, beyond all controversy, the greatest statesman of his age. To him we owe our rescue or exemption from the political calamities which perhaps no one else could have averted: and to him we are indebted for so many homely and substantial benefits of good government, and such brilliant renovations of our national resources, that it seems impossible for the national gratitude to overrate his deserts. If he was at first the victim, he has since shown himself the conqueror, of time and circumstance; and for many years past it has been clear to the unprejudiced that all fault-finding with Mr. Peel's character and political conduct as a whole, resolves itself into a complaint that he was not made another sort of man than he is. . . ."—'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' i. 492. Memorable words were spoken by the Duke of Wellington immediately after the great statesman's death:—"In all the course of my acquaintance with Sir Robert Peel," he said, "I never knew a man in whose truth and justice I had a more lively confidence, or in whom I saw a more invariable desire to promote the public service. In the whole course of my communications with him I never saw an instance in which he did not show the strongest attachment to truth; and I never saw, in the whole course of my life, the smallest reason for suspecting that he stated anything which he did not firmly believe to be fact." We may add M. Guizot's tribute:—"What struck me most in the conversation of Sir Robert Peel was his constant and impassioned anxiety with regard to the condition of the working classes in England; an anxiety which was as much moral as it was political, and under which, under a certain coldness and formality of expression, the feelings of the man as well as the foresight of the statesman were clearly visible. 'There is,' he was wont to say, 'too much

In his private life Peel was seen to great advantage. He was all that a son, a husband, a father should be. His constitutional reserve of manner he threw off among his friends; and on happy occasions displayed conversational gifts of no common order. A graceful scholar, and endowed with a fine taste, he loved to surround himself with men of culture, while he nobly spent a noble portion of his wealth on a collection of works of art of the ancient and modern schools, which was distinguished by its uniform excellence. As a landed proprietor, he was equitable and generous in all his dealings with his tenants. He took a great interest in agricultural pursuits and in the promotion of scientific agriculture. Every new implement or machine attracted his attention, and was introduced upon his estates; while he engaged the most eminent scientific men to instruct his farmers in the best methods of applying science to the cultivation of the land. His sympathy with the poor was as real as his knowledge of their wants was extensive; and every religious, educational, and charitable agency received his support and engaged his intimate concern. Unaffectedly pious, and a Churchman by conviction, he gave freely to all schemes of Church extension. A lover of literature, he was also

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suffering and too much perplexity. It is a disgrace and a danger to our civilisation. It is absolutely necessary that we should render less hard and less precarious the condition of the manual labourer. We cannot do everything; but something may be effected, and something ought to be done." In the active thought of his leisure, this was evidently for him the dominant idea of the future."

its thoughtful and munificent patron; and numerous anecdotes might be told of the deeds of delicate kindness by which he encouraged the aspirant and rewarded the veteran. He delighted to procure the advancement of the sons of men who, in literature, art, or science, had earned distinction but not competency. Born to great wealth, he made a splendid use of it, as, indeed, he did of all that he had at his command; so that it is scarcely the language of exaggeration to say that he was no less the perfect gentleman than the prudent and thoughtful statesman.

Sir Robert Peel was the eldest son of the first baronet of that name; an opulent manufacturer, who had earned his title by his strict and uncompromising Toryism, and his elevation to Mr. Pitt. He was born on the 5th of February, 1788, in, it is said, a cottage contiguous to his father's seat, Chamber Hall, near Bury, which, at the time, was undergoing repair. It is said that the elder Sir Robert, on hearing of his son's birth, vowed "he would give him to his country," which, from his point of view, meant giving him to the Tory Party. In 1790 his father entered Parliament as member for Tamworth, and his solid abilities and identification with the manufacturing interest, soon gave him a good position in the House. He found leisure, however, to supervise the education of his son, with a special regard for that political career to which he had so solemnly dedicated him. To accustom him to the practice of public speaking, he was accustomed, when the boy was twelve years old, to place him on a table every Sunday,

and require him to repeat as much of the morning's sermon as he could recollect. Bred up at home, he was gentle-mannered and of irreproachable conduct, but so sensitive that he shrank from the company of boys of his own age, and would walk "a mile round rather than encounter the rude jests of the Bury lads." From home he was sent to Harrow, where he earned the praise of his masters and the respect of his schoolfellows by his diligence, love of letters, good abilities, and fine temper. Lord Byron was his "form-fellow," and has left on record the impression he produced:—"Peel, the orator and statesman, (that was, or is, or is to be), was my form-fellow, and we were both at the top of our remove (a public-school phrase). We were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend. There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all—masters and scholars—and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor, I was reckoned at least his equal; as a schoolboy, *out* of school, I was always in scrapes, and *he never;* and *in school* he *always* knew his lesson, and I rarely,—but when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history, etc. etc., I think I was *his* superior, as well as of most boys of my standing."

From Harrow he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, where he gave good promise of future distinction. He was the first, under a new and more difficult system of examination, to gain a double first-class in mathematics and classics, and that, too, in the year of such formidable competitors as Hampden (afterwards Bishop of Hereford) and Whately (afterwards Archbishop of

Dublin). Sir Lawrence Peel, his cousin, says of him, at this time, that "with good features, a sweet smile, a well-formed head, high and ample forehead, and a countenance which, when animated, was not wanting in expression or fire, he was generally thought a very good-looking young man." He was renowned for his skill at cricket and on the river, and though he eschewed all that was vicious or demoralising, he entered heartily into every healthy amusement.

In 1808 he completed his course of studies at the University, and in the following year entered the House of Commons as member for Cashel, a borough which was always accessible to the highest bidder. Everything was in his favour when he thus made his appearance in public life. His father was a man of great parliamentary and social influence; he himself was known to be the heir to large estates, was recommended by many personal advantages and by the prestige of his college successes. He took his seat on the Ministerial side of the House,* as a supporter of Mr. Perceval, and his first speech showed that the Tory party had gained an important recruit. He was selected to second the Address to the throne on the 23rd of January, 1810, and produced a very favourable impression; which was strengthened by the self-possession and ease with which he took part in the debate on the unfortunate Walcheren expedition. His reputation as a debater dates, however, from his speech on the 18th of March, 1811, on the subsidising of Portuguese troops by the

* Lord Palmerston entered Parliament at the same time, and under the same banner.

British Government, in the course of which he introduced an eloquent eulogy on the genius and military services of Wellington. Soon afterwards Mr. Perceval offered him the Under-secretaryship of the Colonies, which he immediately accepted, to exchange it in the following year for the more important position of Chief Secretary for Ireland, under Lord Liverpool. That a young man of 24 should be chosen to deal with all the vexed questions of Irish politics augurs considerable imprudence on the part of the Minister who appointed him, or a very thorough conviction of his entire fitness for the work. At that time, however, youth and inexperience were scarcely looked upon as obstacles to promotion. Apparently it was supposed that anybody might be or do what Pitt had been and done at 23. In Peel's case the supposition was not ill-founded.

As Irish Secretary he came at once into collision with Mr. Daniel O'Connell, who had already consecrated his great abilities to the work of political agitation. He was made the object of the Irish orator's eloquent invective and scathing satire, and also of his coarse rough humour, which delighted in vulgar personalities. His opposition to the claims of the Roman Catholics procured him the nickname of "Orange" Peel; but, on the other hand, his marked moderation of view, especially on the question of Education, was most displeasing to the Orange party, the unscrupulous advocates of Protestant ascendancy. Peel's idea was to find in National Education a platform on which both Catholic and Protestant might meet in cordial co-operation, to the gradual diminution of their prejudices as

they learned to know each other better. To some extent the idea has been realized; but not with that completeness which alone could ensure the permanency of a mutual understanding.

On the 25th of February, 1813, Mr. Grattan, the most illustrious as he was the most disinterested of Irish patriots, and the greatest of Irish orators, brought forward a motion for the immediate consideration in a committee of the whole House, of the laws affecting Roman Catholics. The Liverpool Cabinet had agreed to treat the Irish question as an "open" one; and, consequently, nobody was surprised that Mr. Grattan was supported by Lord Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary. The House was astonished, however, at the line taken by Mr. Wellesley Pole, Peel's predecessor in office, who revenged himself for Lord Liverpool's exclusion of him from the Administration, by espousing the cause he had previously opposed, and attacking the Cabinet with unmeasured violence and considerable effect. It fell to Peel to reply to this assailant, and his speech exhibited his powers as a debater in the most brilliant manner. It is remarkable for its similarity in style and method to the great orations of his later years.

"The right honourable gentleman says," he exclaimed,* "that we are not to judge of his political opinions by his conduct when in office; that at that time the Cabinet was united; that he was in a subordinate capacity, not acting upon his own judgment, but executing the commands of others; he adds, too,

* Hansard, First Series, xxiv. 747, *et seq.* The debate lasted four nights.

that documents would be found if the offices were ransacked which would prove that the opinions he now expresses could be reconciled with those he then held. Sir, if this be so,—if the right hon. gentleman did differ from those with whom he was acting, what forbearance has he not shown in this house (he was taunted with arrogating to himself the whole of the government of Ireland)! The official acts of that government were imputed by some of his adversaries to his impetuosity and to his indiscretion, yet he submitted with cheerfulness to every imputation of bigotry and intolerance, and not a word escaped him from which it could be inferred that there was not the most cordial concurrence of sentiment on every branch of the Catholic question between himself and the other members of that government. I may admire the right hon. gentleman for his example of forbearance and of discretion, but I cannot help thinking that it would have been better for him, if he did differ from those whose instructions he was to execute, to have resigned his office rather than have sacrificed his opinions."

He then proceeded to examine the bill which Mr. Grattan had submitted in outline, ridiculing the inadequacy of the provision that the throne should always be occupied by a Protestant, and dwelling, not without exaggeration, on the strange picture of a Protestant Sovereign sitting at a council-table surrounded by Roman Catholic councillors. He declared that the concessions asked, would, if fully carried out, seat a Roman Catholic sovereign on the throne, and that, were it otherwise, an irresponsible Protestant King, with a Catholic Chancellor

and Cabinet to appoint the Bishops, and a Catholic Lord-Lieutenant at Dublin to dispose of Irish Church patronage, would be an impracticability. He referred, in conclusion, to the refusal of the Catholics to grant the Crown a veto on the appointment of Catholic bishops in Ireland: —

"We are told," he said, "we are not to treat with, but legislate for, Catholics; yet when the right honourable gentleman [Mr. Grattan] is asked what securities he will propose, he answers that he has not any to propose, and that to one he will not consent; that is, to the *veto*. But what sort of legislation is this? Why is the *veto* abandoned? Because the Catholics will not consent to it. And if we abandon it on these grounds, upon what principle can we insist on domestic nomination, which we have every reason to believe to be equally objectionable to Catholics? There was a time, Sir, when, by Catholic prelates themselves, the *veto* was admitted not to be incompatible with the Catholic religion. That admission they have retracted; but they have not accompanied that retractation with any admission that domestic nomination is more consistent with it. If, then, you think securities absolutely necessary; and if these prelates have recently issued a formal declaration that, in the present state of their church, no alteration, at this time, can take place in the mode of their appointment, I should think that every person—save those who wish to see all privileges granted to Catholics without any restriction whatever—must see the utter impossibility of coming to any final

or conciliatory adjustment of Catholic claims *at the present moment.*"*

The motion was carried, however, by 264 to 224 votes; and Mr. Grattan afterwards brought in a bill for the admission of Catholics to Parliament on taking a single oath, instead of the oath of allegiance, abjuration, and supremacy, and the declarations against transubstantiation and the invocation of saints. It passed a second reading; but when in Committee the Speaker, Abbot, moved the omission from the first clause of the words "to sit and vote in either House of Parliament," and carried it by the small majority of four.† This success led to the abandonment of the bill,—and a revival of the agitation in favour of the Catholic claims.

In May, 1815, Sir Henry Parnell took up the subject, and introduced into the House of Commons a motion of the usual character. It was opposed by Peel with the usual arguments; but he strengthened them by a reference to the intemperate and disloyal language of some of the Catholic leaders, especially Mr. O'Connell, and by quotations which produced a marked effect upon the House, though the justice of a cause is not weakened by the folly of its advocates. The motion was defeated by a majority of 80. Goaded into a fit of ungovernable passion by Peel's sarcasms, O'Connell, at a public meeting held shortly afterwards, launched against him a furious invective. "I said at the last meeting," exclaimed O'Connell, "in the presence of the note-

* These last four words should be noticed. They indicate that Peel did not believe in a policy of permanent resistance.

† 'Diary of Lord Colchester,' ii. 453, *et seq.*

takers of the police, who are paid by him, that he was too prudent to attack me in my presence. I see the same police-informers here now, and I authorize them carefully to report my words, that Mr. Peel would not *dare* in my presence, nor in any place where he was liable to personal account, to use a single expression derogatory of my interest or my honour!"

Such language, nowadays, if any public man could condescend to use it, would be treated with contemptuous indifference by its object. But in 1815 tempers were hotter, and the arbitrament of the duel was still in fashion. Peel regarded the insult as reflecting on his courage, and authorised Sir Charles Saxton, as his "friend," to take the necessary steps for vindicating it. Sir Charles had an interview with O'Connell's friend, Mr. Lidwill; but these two gentlemen, either from a desire to avoid a public scandal, or from too rigid an interpretation of the laws of honour, could not agree on the indispensable preliminary of "the challenge." They found it impossible to decide whether it should come from O'Connell or from Peel; and, exchanging some fierce retorts in the course of the negotiations, eventually challenged one another. O'Connell hastened to represent this affair as an evasion on the part of Peel and Sir Charles Saxton, and thus again brought Peel to the front. Employing Colonel Brown as his agent, the Irish Secretary now challenged the Irish agitator. By this time the quarrel had become a public matter. The Attorney-General interfered, and O'Connell was arrested, and bound over to keep the peace. It was then proposed that the aggrieved parties should go abroad; but

O'Connell, on his way to Dover, was again arrested, and not released until he had given securities not to quit the kingdom. Meanwhile, Saxton and Lidwill met at Calais, and the latter declining to return the former's fire, the affair ended without bloodshed, Peel, in his novel capacity of a fire-eater, vainly endeavouring to claim a meeting with Lidwill, as O'Connell's representative. A storm of well-deserved ridicule broke upon the two would-be belligerents for their conduct in this unworthy episode, the chief result of which was a feeling of personal antipathy between them, that found expression upon too many occasions.

In his Irish Secretaryship, Peel first gave evidence of his remarkable administrative capacity. He viewed with dislike the constant employment of the military in the repression of civil outrages and popular disturbances; and proceeded to organise a new police-force as a better security for the prevention and detection of crime. This force has always been distinguished for its loyalty, steadiness, and admirable discipline.

In 1817 Mr. Grattan again brought before the House of Commons the grievances of the Catholics, and was answered by Mr. Peel in a speech of indisputable power. The majority against the motion was 24. Mr. Wilberforce records in his Diary, on the 9th of May:—"Roman Catholic question decided. I would not speak. Canning poor—Peel excellent—Lord Castlereagh very good." In the following year, Mr. Abbott, on resigning the Speakership, was called to the House of Peers by the title of Lord Colchester, thereby vacating his seat as member for the University of Oxford. The membership

for the University was regarded as the blue ribbon of Parliament; and both Peel and Canning aspired to win and wear it. But with the strong support of Lord Liverpool and Lord Eldon, Peel completely distanced his illustrious rival, and was elected almost without opposition. Immediately afterwards he resigned the Irish Secretaryship. For this step, a variety of reasons may be and have been assigned; as, for example, the tottering condition of the Government, which, in Lord Dudley's words, "had fallen into a state of discredit and insignificance," a feeling of rivalry with Canning, or his sense of the many evils then afflicting Ireland for which he was not empowered to propose the necessary remedies.

For three years Peel remained out of office; but he was rapidly attaining to an influential position in the House, and was recognised as one of the leaders of the Tory party, second only, indeed, to Mr. Canning. His well-known mastery of financial questions, and of the doctrines of political economy, led to his appointment in 1819 to the chairmanship of the Bank Committee, appointed by the House to inquire into the advisability of the resumption of Cash Payments. In the early days of April, the Committee presented a report, recommending that, in order to facilitate the final and complete restoration of such payments, a bill should be passed, prohibiting the continuance of the payment in gold by the Bank of its notes issued previous to the 1st of January, 1817. This was intended to check the large exportation of gold that was taking place to France. Mr. Peel accordingly introduced a bill, which was

rapidly passed by both Houses. After further investigation, the Committee agreed upon a plan for the resumption of Cash Payments, which was embodied in a series of resolutions, and submitted to the House. It was founded on the principle laid down by Mr. Ricardo, the economist, that the Bank ought to exchange its notes, not for coin, but for gold ingots, the fineness of which should be attested by a stamp, and only in quantities above a certain weight, at a rate to be diminished gradually until it should have descended to the Mint price of £3. 17*s.* 10½*d.*, per ounce; the Committee's object being to secure the convertibility of the Bank notes into cash. The resolutions were proposed in the lower House, on the 24th of May, by Mr. Peel, in a remarkable speech, which established his reputation as a financier, while it revealed the susceptibility of his mind to new impressions. He acknowledged that, in consequence of the evidence brought before the Committee, and the discussion upon that evidence, his opinion on the subject had undergone a material change. "He was ready to avow, without shame or remorse, that he went into the Committee with an opinion very different from that which he at present entertained; for his views of the subject were most materially different when, in 1811, he voted against the resolutions brought forward by Mr. Horner, as the chairman of the Bullion Committee. Having gone into the inquiry, determined to dismiss all former impressions that he might have received, and to obliterate from his memory the vote that he had given some years since when the same question was discussed, he had resolved to apply to it

his undivided and unprejudiced attention, and adopt every inference that authentic information or mature reflection should offer to his mind; nor had he any hesitation in stating that, although he should probably now vote if it were again brought before the House, in opposition to the practical measure then recommended [the resumption of Cash Payments by the Bank in two years], he now, with very little modification, concurred in the principles laid down in the first fourteen resolutions submitted to the House by that very able and much lamented individual. He conceived them to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system." Proceeding to explain the question on which the House was to decide, he observed that "Sir Isaac Newton, retiring from the sublime studies in which he chiefly passed his life—from the contemplation of the heavenly bodies, and from an investigation of the laws by which their motions were guided,—entered upon the examination of this subject. That great man came, at last, to the old—the vulgar, as some called it—doctrine, that the true standard of value consisted in a definite quantity of gold bullion. Every sound writer on the subject came to the same conclusion, that a certain weight of gold bullion with an impression on it denoting it to be of that certain weight, and of a certain fineness, constituted the only true, intelligible, and adequate standard of value; and to that standard the country must return, or the difficulties of our position would be aggravated as we proceeded." In concluding his powerful address, he adverted to the necessity he was under "of opposing himself to an authority [his father, Sir Robert] to which

he had always bowed, and he hoped always should bow, with deference; but here he had a great public duty imposed upon him, and from that duty he would not shrink, whatever might be his private feelings." *

Eventually, a bill embodying these resolutions was introduced and passed through both Houses before the conclusion of the session The Bank Act, as it is called (59 Geo. iii. c. 49), still governs the monetary system of the country. It has been the object of as much abuse from one section of financial economists as of eulogy from the other; but no Administration has ventured to propose its repeal, though its operation has twice been suspended, namely, in 1847 and 1857.

Though not a member of the Government, Peel, still fettered by the traditions of Ultra-Toryism, stepped forward to defend the action of the yeomanry on the occasion of the "Peterloo Massacre,"† and the approval of that action volunteered by the Ministers.‡ He supported them also in passing the notorious "Six Acts." The services which he rendered in his later career may be allowed, however, to obliterate the recollection of the errors into which he was led by his party associations and inherited prejudices.

* Thus, in the first of the three great measures with which his name is associated, as well as in the other two, Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Corn Laws, it was the fate of this distinguished statesman to surprise the public by suddenly appearing as the chief figure in what we may call the triumph of the principles which up to that moment he had spent his life in opposing.—H. MARTINEAU, 'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' i. 215.

† We may note here that this catastrophe called forth Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy.'

‡ That the magistrates acted illegally in dispersing the Manchester meeting is now universally admitted. Even Lord Eldon had his "doubts." See TWISS, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 338.

II.

We record with pleasure that Mr. Peel imitated Mr. Canning's conduct in standing aloof from the persecution, under legal forms, of the unfortunate Queen Caroline, by the King's servants, at the command of their "royal Master." He shared, therefore, in the disfavour with which the King regarded everybody who had the generosity to remember the wrongs inflicted upon her, and the anxieties she had undergone. In the session of 1821, the perennial question of the Catholic claims again demanded the attention of the Commons. Mr. Plunket, on whom Mr. Grattan's mantle had fallen, moved the appointment of a committee to take them into consideration, and obtained a majority of six. The bill, founded on this committee's report, was read a second time, on the 16th of March, by a majority of eleven, after a debate which had been illuminated by one of Mr. Canning's finest efforts of eloquence. In committee some clauses were added for the purpose of regulating the relations of the Irish Catholic Church with the see of Rome, and with the State. On the 2nd of April, the bill was read a third time, and passed by a majority of nineteen.* Mr. Peel,

* Hansard, 2nd Series, iv. 961–1523. The bill was defeated in the Lords, on the second reading, by a majority of 39. It was on this occasion the Duke of York made his famous declaration that his opposition to

in the course of the debate, made it clear to attentive observers that his mind was passing through a process of education on the subject: for he confessed that the disappointment of the non-expectant Catholics would be a source of pain to him; and he added, that, though he could not conscientiously support any bill for their complete emancipation, he should, if such a measure met with the concurrence of the legislature, do his utmost to reconcile the Protestant community to it.

On Canning's resignation of the Board of Control, late in 1820, the post was offered to Mr. Peel,* but probably for the same reason that Canning had resigned, he refused to accept it. Lord Liverpool, however, felt deeply the necessity of strengthening his Administration; and early in 1821, again approached his supporter, this time offering him the Home Secretaryship. As the proceedings connected with the Queen's trial were now at an end, Peel felt in a position to join the Ministry. His accession was not looked upon with any satisfaction by the friends of religious liberty. The 'Annual Register' remarked that his political predilections, sympathies, principles, and prejudices, were very much the same with those of Lord Sidmouth; so that the sub-

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the measure arose "from principles which he had embraced ever since he had been able to judge for himself, and which he hoped he should cherish to the last day of his life." "The Duke of York," says Lord Eldon, "has done more to quiet this matter than everything else put together. It has had a great effect."—Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 416.

* On the 8th of June, 1820, Mr. Peel was married to Julia, the youngest daughter of General Sir John Floyd, Bart.

stitution of the one for the other could have no effect on the course of the Administration. According to Sir James Mackintosh, he was the recognized "spokesman" of "the intolerant faction." In a Cabinet in which Canning was the leading spirit, Peel, with his brilliant gifts, necessarily occupied a subordinate place. Though, as M. Guizot says, far more influential with his party, and held, perhaps, in higher general estimation, he lacked that splendour and versatility as an orator, that attractiveness of character and fascination of success as a man, which had gained for Canning the enthusiasm of friends, and the admiration of the Public. Justice was done to Peel, to his zealous and laborious ability, to his practical intellect, to his wide and deep knowledge of facts and questions. He was admitted to be an excellent Home Secretary; but he was no longer regarded as the probable head of a new Administration. He was overshadowed by the superior genius of Canning, and the dazzling nature of his foreign policy. It was not that Peel fell back; but that Canning outstripped him. Some persons inclined to believe that he was fully aware of the fact, and quite contented to occupy the second rank. And this may very well be, for Peel was a patient man, and knew how to wait. Certainly, he betrayed no jealousy or ill-humour, either in his conduct or his speeches. Guizot observes that, in addition to the natural rectitude and equity of his mind, which would not permit him to underrate the merits and successes even of a rival, his reserve and susceptibility precluded his engaging in dubious conflicts for a personal object, or his putting himself forward with undue haste. With a modesty and a

dignity which belonged to his character, he accepted the leadership of Mr. Canning; and if at times he may have felt wounded or aggrieved, all that the world saw was a wonderful calmness, patience, and perseverance. And for Peel's peculiar abilities no better sphere of work could have been found than the Home Office. The times were critical, and needed that caution directed by boldness, that firmness tempered by conciliation, which Peel knew so well how to display. To the discharge of duties of extreme delicacy and difficulty he brought an industry that never wearied, a tact that was never at fault, a courtesy that never failed, and a sweet serenity of temper that nothing disturbed.

The present tenure of his Home Secretaryship was distinguished by the considerable improvements which he introduced into the Criminal law. Accepting the principles, and gratefully availing himself of the labours of Sir James Mackintosh and Sir Samuel Romilly, he both simplified and humanized it. A hundred and thirty acts of Parliament he consolidated into five. His labours in this direction have hardly received the acknowledgment they deserved, because we have forgotten the severities which formerly disgraced our legislation. We have forgotten that the law deliberately set a value upon property which it refused to human life. From the Restoration to the death of George the 3rd, that is, in a period of 160 years, no fewer than 187 capital offences were added to the Criminal Code. In the reign of George the 2nd, thirty-three acts were passed creating capital offences; and in the first fifty years of George the 3rd, no fewer

than sixty-three.* To Peel belongs the credit of having brought practical statesmanship to bear upon this legislative enormity. He was the first Minister of the Crown who took up the work of philanthropy. It is true that he was not able to effect much in mitigating the rigour, though he so greatly simplified the complexity, of the Criminal law. Even under his revised code upwards of forty kinds of forgery still remained punishable with death. But his must be the honour of having dealt the first effective blow at the cruel policy of so many generations of legislators. His must be the honour also of having removed the restrictions which an arbitrary spirit of government had imposed upon popular freedom; so that he was able to say, "Every law found on the statute-book when I entered office, which imposed any temporary or extraordinary restraint on the liberty of the subject, has been either repealed or suffered to expire."

We have adverted, in our memoir of Mr. Canning, to the circumstances which attended the death of Lord Liverpool and the formation of the Canning Government. It was the object of Peel and Lord Eldon to re-constitute the Liverpool Cabinet, by the simple expedient of putting at its head a Premier under whom both the pro-Catholics and the anti-Catholics could continue to serve, as they had served under Liverpool. They were baffled by the ambition of Canning, who had long fixed his eye upon the Premiership, and perceived that his opportunity had come. It was with him a

* Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History,' ii. 595.

question of *aut Cæsar aut nullus;* he would fill the first place, or he would fill none. Peel felt convinced that no Government could stand from which Canning was excluded. At the same time he himself was not prepared to act under a pro-Catholic leader.* He explained his views very fully in a letter addressed to Lord Eldon:—†

"Differing on the Catholic question from every one of my colleagues in the Government who is a member of the House of Commons, still I have been enabled to act cordially with them, and much to my satisfaction, on other matters. I esteem and respect them, and should consider it a great misfortune, were his Majesty to lose the services of any one of them, but particularly of Canning. I can say with truth, that on all matters of domestic and general policy (with the exception of the Catholic question) my opinions are in accordance with theirs. In regarding the interests of the country, and the position of the Government, I cannot confine my views to the Catholic question alone. Our differences on that question are a great evil; but they ought not to make us forget that on other subjects,

* In 1825 Parliament agreed to a bill for suppressing the Catholic Association, which had been established two years before, and had acquired a dangerous amount of power. A bill for the removal of the disabilities of the Catholics was then introduced into the House of Commons, where it passed its third reading. Peel then tendered his resignation to Lord Liverpool, in order to facilitate a settlement of the question; but the Relief Bill being rejected by the Lords, he was induced to withdraw it. His course throughout was marked by thorough straightforwardness and honesty.

† Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' ii. 589, 590.

some of not less importance—Parliamentary Reform, for instance—we are united . . . If I agreed with Canning on the Catholic question, or if his opinions had been the same with Lord Liverpool's, I should not have hesitated to remain in office, had his Majesty commissioned Canning to form a Government, and had Canning proposed to me that I should form a part of it. . .

"I have for many years taken a leading part in the House of Commons, in opposition to the Roman Catholic claims; and for the last five years (God knows not without serious difficulty and embarrassment) I have filled that office which is mainly responsible for the administration of affairs in Ireland. Can I see the influence of the office of Prime Minister transferred from Lord Liverpool to Canning, and added to that of leader of the House of Commons, without subjecting myself to misconstruction with respect to my views on the Catholic question? Can it be so transferred without affecting my particular situation as Secretary for the Home Department, and my weight and efficiency in the administration of Irish affairs? It is with deep and unaffected regret that I answer these questions in the negative."

To meet this personal difficulty, Mr. Canning offered Peel the Foreign Secretaryship; but the offer did not remove his objection to a pro-Catholic head of the Government. On the 9th of April he had an interview with Canning, and by the King's command, proposed the appointment of the Duke of Wellington to the Premiership as a settlement of all the points at issue. This was naturally rejected by Canning; and the King

finally entrusting to him the formation of a Ministry, Peel resigned, in company with the Duke of Wellington, Lords Eldon, Westmoreland, Melville, and Bathurst. Of the conduct of some of these former colleagues, Canning had good reason to complain; but Peel had acted from the first with perfect candour and singleness of purpose, as Canning himself bore witness. He had made no unreasonable difficulty; he had caused no unavoidable embarrassment; and he had plainly told the Sovereign that the construction of an exclusively "Protestant Government" was practically impossible. And in the rancorous opposition directed against the new Premier, he, at least, took no part.

After Canning's death, Lord Goderich, who had been the Ministerial leader in the House of Lords, was raised by the King to the critical post of Premier. He called to his assistance Mr. Huskisson as Colonial Secretary, and gave the Chancellorship of the Exchequer to Mr. Herries; but during the recess a difference of opinion springing up between these two Ministers, which Lord Goderich was unable or unwilling to compose, he resigned an office for which he felt himself unfit.* After fruitless overtures to Lord Harrowby and Mr. Huskis-

* "We thought highly in former times of Lord Goderich, highly of him as a man of pure intentions, liberal views for one of his class, average abilities, and rather superior skill in business. As a subaltern he was respectable; as a chief he has shown himself despicable. He appears to have wrecked the Government through sheer pusillanimity—a pilot scared by the whistling of the wind through his stout cordage! His very amiabilities have been auxiliary to this unhappy result. 'Private vices,' says Mandeville, 'are frequently public benefits.' We are almost tempted to maintain the converse, and to hold that private virtues are often public mischiefs."—A. W. Fonblanque, 'England under Seven Administrations,' i. 127.

son, the King commissioned the Duke of Wellington to form a new Administration. "He said," wrote the Duke to Peel,* "that he thought the Government must be composed of persons of both opinions with respect to the Roman Catholic question; that he approved of all his late and former servants; and that he had no objection to anybody excepting to Lord Grey . . . He said that it was to be understood that the Roman Catholic question was not to be made a Cabinet question; that there was to be a Protestant Lord Chancellor, a Protestant Lord Lieutenant, and a Protestant Lord Chancellor in Ireland."

To Peel it appeared that an attempt to constitute an united Government on the principle of resistance to the Roman Catholic claims was almost hopeless, while it was very doubtful whether the politicians who had served under Lord Liverpool could again be brought together. He was favourable, however, to the attempt being made; and it proved so far successful that Huskisson, Charles Grant [afterwards Lord Glenelg], and Lord Palmerston became members of the Duke's Cabinet;† while Lord Dudley, Mr. William Lamb [afterwards Lord Melbourne], and other friends of Mr. Canning, who had not served in the Liverpool Administration, also came to his assistance. Lord Anglesey was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Mr. Lamb, who was a strenuous pro-Catholic, Chief Secretary. Peel resumed the Home Secretaryship, and his friend Mr. Goulburn became

* 'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 11, 12.

† Not long before, the Duke had declared that he should be mad to accept the post of Prime Minister, as he was so little fit for it.

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lord Ellenborough was appointed Privy Seal, Lord Melville, President of the Board of Control, and Lord Aberdeen, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. On the whole, the tone of the new Government was less liberal than that of the Canning Ministry; and its composition did not offer a prospect of stability. Its strength lay in the weakness of the Opposition, which was divided into several non-coalescing sections.*

* It is interesting to compare the opinion of the Government held by different individuals. Huskisson, in his speech at Liverpool, on the 5th of February, said:—"The presence in office of such men as Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Lamb is the most satisfactory of all guarantees that the general principles of our foreign and commercial system would remain unchanged, and that Ireland would be governed with the strictest impartiality in respect to the Catholic question." On the other hand, Lord Eldon, who had not been consulted, and had received no offer of office, told the Duke that he thought the Ministry "a d—d bad one." And he wrote to his daughter "that six out of the thirteen members favoured the Catholic claims; the other seven," he adds, "are as yet for Protestants, but some *very loose*. You will observe Dudley, Huskisson, Grant, Palmerston, and Lyndhurst, (five) were all *Canningites*, with whom the rest were, three weeks ago, in most violent contest and opposition. These things are to me quite marvellous . . . Viscountess Canning has written a strong letter, as Lord Ashley tells me, to Huskisson, strongly reproaching him for joining (I use Ashley's own expression) her husband's murderers." It must be noted that Huskisson greatly offended the Whigs and Mr. Canning's friends by consenting to serve under the Duke, and his own words were quoted against him, "that his wounds were too green and too fresh to admit of his serving in the same Cabinet with those who had deserted the service of the country, at the time his friend's administration was formed." As for Peel, he wrote to his friend Gregory:—"I will say at once that, looking at the present state of this country in its various relations, domestic and foreign—looking at the conflicting and nicely-balanced interests at home—political, commercial, religious—the menacing attitude of foreign powers towards each other—I never could have consented to form part of an administration proceeding upon an exclusive

The work of the session began on the 29th of February. Soon afterwards Lord John (now Earl) Russell, who has lived to celebrate the jubilee of his first legislative achievement, introduced a bill for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, thus following in the footsteps of his great Whig predecessor, Mr. Fox. To some extent their harsh operation was neutralised by the Annual Indemnity Act; but no just reason could be adduced for subjecting Nonconformists to the stigma they necessarily cast. For the security of the Church they could not be required, for their operation did not extend to Ireland and Scotland. Objection might also

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basis, till every honest and sincere effort had been exhausted to unite in the public service men of principles corresponding to those which were entertained by the administration of Lord Liverpool." The spectacle of Peel, as Home Secretary, opposing, and Lord Anglesey, as Lord Leiutenant, supporting the Catholic claims, suggested to Moore his 'Thoughts on the Present Government of Ireland,' in which he says:—

"Oft have I seen, in gay, equestrian pride,
Some well-roug'd youth round Astley's Circus ride
Two stately steeds—standing with graceful straddle,
Like him of Rhodes, with foot on either saddle. . . .
So rides along, with canter smooth and pleasant,
That horseman bold, Lord Anglesea, at present;—
Papist and *Protestant* the coursers twain,
That bend their necks to his impartial rein . . .
While Peel, the showman in the middle, cracks
His long-curl'd whip, to cheer the doubtful hacks . . .
If once my Lord his graceful balance loses,
Or fails to keep each foot where each horse chooses;
If Peel but gives one *extra* touch of whip
To *Papist's* tail or *Protestant's* ear-tip—
That instant ends their glorious horsemanship!
Oft bolt the sever'd steeds, for mischief free,
And down between them plumps Lord Anglesea!"

reasonably be taken to the manner in which they profaned the Holy Sacrament by reducing it to a mere civil ordinance, enforced upon persons who probably did not accept its sacred character, or were spiritually unfit to receive it. Was it becoming,—it was asked, in the words of Cowper,—*

> "To make the symbols of atoning grace
> An office-key, a picklock to a place?"

Peel acknowledged that the Acts could no longer be maintained as necessary for the protection of the Church; and consequently there was little force in his argument, that, practically, they were no grievance to the Dissenters. We suspect he was not displeased when, on a division taking place, the Government was left in a minority of 44 (Ayes, 237; Noes, 193). At all events, with singular readiness, he undertook to communicate with the Archbishop of Canterbury and other prelates, so as to obtain their co-operation in a graceful concession to the wishes of the House. A declaration was then substituted for the sacramental test, with the consent of Lord John Russell and his friends; and the Bill, unopposed, passed through the Lower Chamber. In the Lords it was supported by the two Archbishops and the Bishops of Lincoln, Durham, and Chester; and though some opposition was raised by Lord Eldon, and some amendments were introduced (the principal one being the insertion, in the declaration, of the words "on the true faith of a Christian," so as to exclude Jews), it proceeded through

* From his poem of 'Expostulation.'

the various stages with facility, and became law on the 2nd of May.

The Catholic claims were brought forward by Sir Francis Burdett, and a resolution declaring it expedient to consider the laws affecting Roman Catholics, with a view to their final and conciliatory adjustment, was carried by a majority of six (May 8th). By direction of the House, it was communicated to the House of Lords at a conference. The Marquis of Lansdowne, in a speech of great ability, invited their lordships to concur in the resolution; and was supported in the debate by the Dukes of Sussex and Gloucester, the Marquis of Londonderry, the Marquis of Wellesley, Lords Goderich and Plunket, and other peers. The opposition was conducted by the Duke of Cumberland, Lord Lyndhurst (the Chancellor), * Lord Eldon (ex-Chancellor), the Duke of Wellington, and a phalanx of peers. After a brilliant discussion, extending over two nights, the Lords rejected the resolution by a majority of 44. †

In the course of the debate in the Commons, Brougham remarked that no single member of those who had opposed Sir Francis Burdett's motion, had affirmed the proposition that things could remain as they were; and Peel, as well, perhaps, as other ministers, could not conceal or deny the great progress which the question of

* Lord Lyndhurst at this time exercised an extraordinary influence. He was reputed to have had much to do with the formation of the new Government, and had high credit for his address in contriving to hold the Great Seal under three premiers in one year.—LORD CAMPBELL, 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' iii. 58.

† Hansard, 2nd series, xix. 1214.

Catholic Relief had made in Parliament, and the greater progress which it had made out of doors.* In spite of the Lords, the battle was nearly ended, and the victory was to fall to the champions of religious liberty. A fact which specially forced itself upon the observant mind of Peel as peculiarly significant of the progress of public opinion, and of the ultimate issue of the contest, was this; that many of the younger members of the House of Commons, who had previously taken a part against the Roman Catholic claims, now admitted their change of opinion; while he also remarked that the roll of speakers against concession was rarely if ever strengthened by the adhesion of a young member even of ordinary ability.

Meanwhile, the settlement of this great question was being facilitated by a ministerial quarrel which arose on a wholly different subject. The Cabinet had not been altogether a happy family. There had been a misunderstanding between the Premier and Mr. Huskisson with respect to language used by the latter in his election speech at Liverpool. He was reported to have said that he had obtained from the Duke a guarantee that Mr. Canning's principles would be followed out; but he proved that he had really said nothing more than that the composition of the Cabinet was a guarantee for its adoption of a liberal policy. There had been a misunderstanding about the Corn Bill, from which Huskisson successfully insisted on omitting all provisions of a prohibitory character. Lastly, in the month of May, Mr. Peel introduced a bill for disfranchising the corrupt borough of East Retford, and transferring

* 'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 101.

the franchise to the neighbouring hundreds. But Huskisson felt bound by previous declarations to vote for its transference to Birmingham, as proposed by Mr. Tennyson. He was at the time in feeble health, and weary with heavy work. Going home, exhausted and yet excited, after a stormy debate, in which he had been forced to abandon his colleagues, he sat down and wrote a hasty letter to the Duke of Wellington, intended as an offer to resign. The Premier, not unwilling to get rid of a lieutenant between whom and himself no great sympathy existed, treated the letter as an actual and formal resignation, and immediately laid it before the King. Mr. Huskisson, unprepared for so swift an acceptance of his offer, sent Lord Dudley, and afterwards Lord Palmerston, to explain to the Duke that he had mistaken the purport of the letter. With characteristic abruptness, the Duke replied, "It is no mistake, it can be no mistake, it shall be no mistake;" and refused to allow that he had acted hastily or under misconception.* A correspondence followed between the Duke and Huskisson; but as the latter would not ask permission to withdraw his unfortunate letter, and the former would not request him to withdraw it, no result was arrived at. By his own act Mr. Huskisson had thrown himself out of the race, and we do not judge the Duke unfairly in imputing to him a secret feeling of satisfaction. Morally, his conduct was beyond criticism; the letter was really and truly a resignation, and he was certainly within his right in so construing it. Politically,

* 'Biographical Memorials of Huskisson.' p. 172.

however, he was guilty of a grave error; for, as with Huskisson, the other Canningites resigned, Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Charles Grant, and Mr. William Lamb, he deprived himself of the support of an influential party.* This was clearly apparent to the sagacious old ex-Chancellor. "The Minister," said Lord Eldon,† "will have great difficulties to struggle with. The Whigs, the Canningites, and the Huskissonites will join, and be very strong."‡

Mr. Grant's resignation of the Presidency of the Board of Trade led to the appointment of Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, who thereupon vacated his seat in the House as member for the county of Clare. He was a supporter of the Catholic claims, and his re-election was considered certain. But the Catholic leaders seized the opportunity thus afforded of bringing matters to a crisis. They put forward O'Connell for the vacancy; for though, as a Catholic, he could not take the oaths which would seat him in the House of Commons, he was not legally disqualified as a candidate. His appearance in this capacity roused an immense popular enthusiasm. The county of Clare was overrun by an

* Sir G. C. Lewis, 'British Administrations,' p. 421.

† Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' iii. 48.

‡ Mr. Greville remarks:—"When upon the East Retford affair Huskisson resigned, and in such an extraordinary manner, the Duke felt that there was a disposition to embarrass him by these perpetual tenders of resignation, which he believed they thought he would not venture to accept. . . I believe that Huskisson had no intention of embarrassing the Duke and none of resigning; but for a cool and sensible man his conduct is most extraordinary, for he acted with the precipitation of a schoolboy and shewed a complete want of all those qualities of prudence and calm deliberation for which he has the greatest credit."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 131.

army of O'Connellite canvassers and lecturers. Meetings were held everywhere and every day. The Catholic clergy entered heartily into the movement; and, as Sheil said, each altar became a tribune. The position of the electors, it is true, was not altogether pleasant; for if the priests appealed to their religious and patriotic sympathies, the landlords worked upon their fears. But the cause was one which inevitably triumphed over purely personal interests. "The time is come," said the great Irish agitator, "when the system which has been pursued towards this country must be put a stop to. It will not do for the future to say, 'Sweet friend, I wish you well'; but it must be shown by acts that they do wish us well. It is time that this system should be put an end to; and I am come here to put an end to it." As Sir George Lewis observes, the speaker had now arrived at the conviction—which he only too successfully impressed upon the mind of the Irish people—that nothing was to be hoped from the justice of England, and that the relief which he sought must be extorted from her fears. The mode of remonstrance which he adopted, without being a resort to violence or a breach of the law, was not the less a defiance to England. "He approached the portals of the Constitution with a demand, not a petition, for admittance. We think that he was right: the patience of the Irish Catholics had been long tried, and had borne much; but the intolerant spirit of Great Britain seemed equally proof against time and reason.

Quam neque longa dies, pietas nec mitigat ulla.

Something more effective than annual motions in the two Houses of Parliament was required, in order to remove the civil disabilities of six millions of British subjects. As the Catholics, though they could not sit and vote in Parliament, could exercise the elective franchise, the experiment which Mr. O'Connell had tried in Clare would manifestly be repeated with success in a large number of the other counties in Ireland."* Then was seen the folly of the obstinate resistance which the party of intolerance had so long maintained against a demand obviously just and equitable. Had Catholic Emancipation been granted when the Union was concluded, there is every reason to believe that Ireland would at this moment be as contented as Scotland is. Its people would have accepted as a gift, made in a spirit of friendship and cordiality, that which they were afterwards taught to regard as a concession extorted from the apprehensions of a jealous and reluctant nation. They would never have learned, because they would never have been taught, the unhappy lesson that England might be made to yield to pressure what it would not grant to reason. So true is it that nations no more than individuals can do wrong, without being ultimately overtaken by the Nemesis of offended justice.

Before the polling day, the debate in the Lords, to which we have incidentally adverted, took place on the Catholic claims. It drew from the Duke of Wellington a declaration which was sufficiently ambiguous to excite the hopes

* Lewis, 'British Administrations,' pp. 452, 453.

of some and the fears of others. He said:*—"There is also one fact respecting the state of things in Ireland, to which I should wish to call your Lordships' attention. From 1781 to 1791, during which many troublesome questions with respect to that country were discussed, the Roman Catholic question was in fact never heard of; and so little was the question thought about, that when, at that period, a bill was brought into the House of Commons respecting the Roman Catholics of England, it is a remarkable fact that the then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland was not only not consulted on the subject, but actually did not know of it until the bill was brought into parliament. So little did the Catholics of Ireland disturb the public mind at that moment, that the question was allowed to pass quietly by, almost without comment. If the public mind was now suffered to be thus tranquil—if the agitators of Ireland would only leave the public mind at rest—the people would become more satisfied, and I certainly think it would then be possible to do something."†

* Hansard, 2nd Series, xix. 1291.

† An acute observer, writing at the time, says (June 18th, 1828):—"The Duke of Wellington's speech on the Catholic question is considered by many to have been so moderate as to indicate a disposition on his part to concede Emancipation, and bets have been laid that Catholics will sit in Parliament next year. Many men are resolved to see it in this light who are anxious to join his Government, and whose scruples with regard to that question are removed by such an interpretation of his speech. I do not believe he means to do anything until he is compelled to it, which if he remains in office he will be; for the success of the Catholic question depends neither on Whigs nor Tories, the former of whom have not the power and the latter not the inclination to carry it. The march of time and the state of Ireland will effect it in spite of everything, and its slow but continual advance can neither be retarded by its enemies, nor accelerated by its friends."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 133.

Lord Eldon, addressing a correspondent, remarks that "O'Connell's proceedings in Ireland, and the supposed or real ambiguity which marked the Duke of Wellington's speech, have led to a very general persuasion that the Ministry intend, or at least that the Duke intends, next session, to emancipate the Roman Catholics, as he has the Dissenters; and the world is uneasy."*

The Clare election took place on the 30th of June and following days; it was soon apparent that Mr. Fitzgerald had no chance; and as the certainty of defeat was increased by each day's returns, he at length withdrew. O'Connell was accordingly returned as legally elected by a majority of qualified voters; but on the face of the return were stated the circumstances of the election, and a notification of the religion of each candidate, and an explanation that a protest against the election as illegal had been offered and rejected. A petition against his return was lodged, of course, in the House of Commons; but the session being nearly at an end, no proceedings were taken upon it, and O'Connell was free to agitate during the recess in his new capacity of member of parliament. Writing on the 9th of July, Lord Eldon says: †—"Nothing is talked of now which interests anybody the least in the world, except the election of Mr. O'Connell, and the mischief that it will produce among debaters in the House of Commons, and the more serious mischief which it will, in all human probability, excite in Ireland. As O'Connell

* Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' iii. 55.

† *Ibid*, iii. 54.

will not, though elected, be allowed to take his seat unless he will take the oaths, etc. (and that he won't do unless he can get absolution), his rejection from the Commons may excite rebellion in Ireland. At all events, this business must bring the Roman Catholic question, which has been so often discussed, to a crisis and a conclusion. The nature of that conclusion I don't think likely to be favourable to Protestantism." We may smile at the veteran Tory's notion that an act of justice would prove injurious to Protestantism; but one thing is evident, that the Clare election had let a ray of light in upon minds which had previously been blinded with an excess of darkness. And when an Eldon admitted that a conclusion must be arrived at, we shall feel no surprise that an impressionable statesman like Peel saw the necessity of yielding to what was almost a national demand, and not the demand only of the Irish nation, but of a considerable and influential party in both England and Scotland. There were but two alternatives; concession, or the reconquest of Ireland, and the occupation of it as a conquered dependency. "Such is the extraordinary power of the Catholic Association," writes Lord Anglesey, the Lord-Lieutenant, under date of July the 2nd, "or rather of the agitators, of whom there are many of high ability, of ardent mind, of great daring—that I am quite certain they could lead on the people to open rebellion at a moment's notice; and their organisation is such that, in the hands of desperate and intelligent leaders, they would be extremely formidable." "I have little doubt," writes the Chief Secretary, "that

the peasantry of the South at present look forward to the period of O'Connell's expulsion from the House of Commons as the time of rising, but any occurrence in the interval which should appear to be adverse to the interests of the Roman Catholic body might precipitate this result." What alarmed Government the most, however, and was, indeed, the most perplexing feature of Irish Society, was the sudden and almost entire cessation of crime in Ireland. Such a result, had it been accomplished through recognized moral agencies, had it been brought about by the prosperity of the country or improved education, would have been hailed with delight; but the Government, and all thinking people, saw, that, as flowing from the strength of the Catholic organisation, and the power of its leaders, it was calculated to excite very serious apprehensions. "At the bidding of those leaders," says the historian of the 'Thirty Years' Peace,'—a peace too often disturbed by rumours of wars, if not by wars themselves,—"feuds were suspended; factions met and acted as brethren; and men mastered their strongest propensities, in order to become a vast soldiery for the achievement of political objects. In almost every county the judges on circuit congratulated the magistrates on the disappearance of atrocious crimes, and the paucity of even the lighter offences. The Government would rather have had to deal with the average amouut of Irish outrage than to witness a lull which boded a coming hurricane. Ireland was governed by a power even greater than their own."

But the danger was not only from Catholic Ireland.

The sister country has, unfortunately, always exhibited as a matter of fact that division into two nations which Lord Beaconsfield, in one of his earlier novels, predicates of England. But there, the division is not between rich and poor; it is between Catholic and Protestant. The chasm which separates them—a wide gulf of history, thought, feeling, belief, and aspiration—has never been bridged over; but it was deeper and broader in the last years of George the 4th than it has been or is under Victoria. It plainly marked out Irish society into two antagonistic sections. As a counterpoise to the Catholic Association, the Orangemen formed themselves into Brunswick Clubs, which imitated the Catholic organisation, and collected a Protestant "rent." "The Orangemen," writes Lord Anglesey, "or, I suppose I am now to call them the Brunswickers, are rivalling the Association both in violence and rent." In violence, indeed, they exceeded their rivals; and the Ministry began to fear that they would soon have on their hands a civil war, and a civil war in which the Irish constabulary and the Irish soldiers might not be on the side of the constituted authorities.*

Communications respecting the state of Ireland, and the desirability of settling the Catholic question, passed between Peel and the Duke of Wellington on the 9th and the 11th of August, and were submitted to Lord

* Lord Anglesey writes on the 25th of July;—"I think it important that the depôts of Irish recruits should be gradually removed, under the appearance of being required to join their regiments, and that whatever regiments sent here should be those of Scotland, or at all events of men not recruited in the south of Ireland."—'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 127.

Lyndhurst. Peel distinctly stated his opinion that the time had come when concession could no longer be delayed, and he offered to resign his post, in the belief that by so doing he would facilitate the work of adjustment. He did not desire to shrink from the unpopularity that would inevitably attend a declaration of his change of opinion. "Be the sacrifices, private and public, what they may," he wrote, "I will cordially co-operate with you in the settlement of this question, and cordially support your Government." He forsesaw all the penalties to which the course he had resolved to take would expose him; the rage of party, his rejection by the University of Oxford, the alienation of private friends, the interruption of family affections, and, what he valued infinitely less, the loss of office and of royal favour. But the conviction had been forced upon his mind that Ireland could be pacified only by granting to the Catholics the relief they demanded; and he wisely set honesty above consistency, an honest care for the national interests above a bigoted adherence to individual opinion. He could not but be moved by the emphatic language of Lord Anglesey, who urged the necessity of immediate legislation, and, while making himself answerable for the tranquillity of Ireland during the winter, plainly stated that if, when Parliament met, nothing was done to satisfy the Catholics, there would be rebellion.*

Early in January, 1829, the Duke and Mr. Peel

* Mr. Grenville, writing to the Duke of Buckingham (September the 9th, 1828), says:—"The measure of Catholic emancipation is fast approaching, and that irresistibly. I know from the most unquestionable authority that very many of the Orange Protestants in Ireland are now

finally resolved on facing the difficulty before them. As a preliminary step, the Duke opened communications with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishops of London and Durham, in the hope of obtaining their co-operation, but was met with a very decisive refusal. Apprehending that the King might hear of this result, and immediately make some public and formal declaration of his determination, on conscientious and religious grounds, to maintain the Catholic disabilities, and thus assume an attitude similiar to that which his father had assumed, Peel, on the 12th of January, addressed a letter to the Duke of Wellington, offering, if he desired it, to retain office and assist him in carrying the projected measure. The letter was accompanied by a very clear and cogent memorandum, which explained the position of the Catholic Question, and suggested certain reasons why the King should authorize the Cabinet to take into consideration the state of Ireland.* The Duke submitted the Memorandum to the King,† who gave the

so entirely alarmed at their own position, that they express, in the most unqualified terms, their earnest desire for any settlement of the question at issue on any terms . . . It must take place, as I believe, before many months shall pass."—'Court of George the 4th,' ii. 380.

* 'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 284–294.

† "When the Duke had made up his mind that he could no longer refuse Catholic Emancipation, without endangering the loss of Ireland, he told the King, who was decidedly averse to the measure, that only one of three alternatives remained to him—either to reconquer Ireland, to make the concession, or to resign. Constituted as the army then was (*a*), the first was impossible; the choice must then fall on one of the other two. The King demanded time to consider. In the meantime the Duke applied to Peel for his concurrence."—RAIKES, 'Journal.'

(*a*) That is, with so large a proportion of Irish Catholics.

authority as advised; and Peel remained at his post, to the great satisfaction of his colleagues, who unanimously agreed to accept the principle of the proposed settlement. The several measures which the Duke and Peel had in contemplation were submitted to the Cabinet, on the 17th of January, in a Memorandum prepared by the latter. Their objects were the relief of the Catholics from civil disabilities, and the regulation of the Elective Franchise, which was then, to a large extent, in the hands of a class known as Forty-shilling freeholders. And this was followed up by a passage being inserted in the speech from the Throne, which ran as follows:—"His Majesty recommends that you should review the laws which impose civil disabilities on His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. You will consider whether the removal of those disabilities can be effected consistently with the full and permanent security of our establishments in Church and State, with the maintenance of the Reformed Religion established by law, and of the rights and privileges of the Bishops and of the clergy of his realm, and of the churches committed to their charge." A reluctant assent having been extorted from the King, Parliament was opened by commission on the 5th of February, and the royal speech read by the Chancellor.*

* Writing on the 6th of February, Greville says:—"Now, then, the Duke is all powerful, and of course he will get all the honour of the day. [He had previously had a misunderstanding with Lord Anglesey, which led to the latter's resignation; so that the Marquis failed to receive the credit which certainly belonged to him.] Not that he does not deserve a great deal for having made up his mind to the thing; he has managed it with firmness, prudence, and dexterity; but to O'Connell and the Association, and

In Parliament the first step of the Government was to introduce a Bill for the suppression of the Catholic Association; and as this was the acknowledged preliminary to the promised measure of relief, it excited no opposition, and passed speedily through both Houses. So far as the Catholics were concerned, they had no motive for maintaining an Association which had done its work. On the 5th of March, Peel brought forward the great measure of the Session. It proposed an oath, in the place of the Oath of Supremacy, by which a Catholic entering Parliament undertook to support the existing institutions of the State, and not to attack those of the Church. It threw open every corporate office, and all municipal advantages; it admitted Catholics to the administration of civil and criminal justice, but it excluded them from the offices of Regent, of Lord Chancellor of England and Ireland, and Viceroy of Ireland, and, as a matter of course, from all offices connected with the Church, the Universities, and Public Schools, and from all disposal of Church patronage. It proposed certain securities and restrictions, the most important being the substitution of a ten-pound for a forty-shilling qualification for the franchise. Unfortunately the Government, by refusing to

those who have fought the battle on both sides of the water, the success of the measure is due. Indeed, Peel said as much, for it was the Clare election which convinced both him and the Duke that it must be done, and from that time the only question was whether he should be a party to it or not. If the Irish Catholics had not brought matters to this pass by agitation and association, things might have remained as they were for ever, and all these Tories would have voted on till the day of their death against them."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i, 168.

endow the Roman Catholic clergy, lost a great opportunity of engaging them in support of the Irish administration. It forbade also the adoption of episcopal titles and names by Roman Catholic clergy; the extension of monachism; and the introduction of more Jesuits than were already in the country, while these were henceforth to be subject to registration.

The Minister's speech in introducing this memorable Bill lasted four hours, "during which time the House was alternately in a state of profound stillness, and echoing with cheers, which at times were so loud as to be heard in Westminster Hall." It was at once an explanation and a vindication; and in both respects was eminently successful. As an explanation, it was well arranged, luminous in statement, and cogent in reasoning; as a vindication, it was modest, clear, and effective. It let in a flood of light upon the character of the speaker, and showed to the public for the first time the full measure of his powers, and the nature of the services that the country might reasonably expect from him. Bred as he had been in an atmosphere of the narrowest conservatism, it was not the less apparent that his mind was capable of receiving and applying new impressions; and that though a constitutional dislike of change might ordinarily incline him to travel in the old ways, yet when the welfare of the State demanded it, he was capable of striking into new and unexpected paths. A writer of eminence remarks that a statesman who, setting out on his course with high and definite aims, finds his principles by the wayside as he proceeds, can never be the highest of his order, however faithful and

courageous he may be in the application of the truths which he has appropriated; but, in the absence of the loftiest statesmanship which can be conceived, which no reasonable nation expects at any given time to enjoy,—which, indeed, our system is hardly calculated to develop,—the greatest blessing which can be desired is that of a statesman able to understand and guide the time. That faculty of guiding and leading-on, is in itself a proof of his superiority to "the average wisdom of his generation." And so it came to pass that thoughtful observers who had previously seen in Peel only a capable administrator, a fluent and perspicuous speaker, and a man of high moral character, from this date discerned in him a statesman of whom much might reasonably be hoped, who was deserving of the fullest confidence, who might yet be expected to kindle with popular sympathy, and, as he was not afraid to break with the past, to estimate and fitly provide for the needs of the future.

In the course of this great speech Mr. Peel said: *—"I have for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catholics from Parliament and the high offices of the State. I do not think it was an unnatural or unreasonable struggle. I resign it in consequence of the conviction that it can be no longer advantageously maintained: from believing that there are not adequate materials or sufficient instruments for its

* Peel, on the 29th of February, had vacated his seat for the University of Oxford, and accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. He offered himself for re-election, but was beaten by Sir Robert Inglis (755 to 609 votes); and on the 3rd of March, took his seat for Westbury.

effectual and permanent continuance. I yield therefore to a moral necessity which I cannot control, unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishment that I wish to defend . . . We are placed in a position in which we cannot remain. We cannot continue stationary. There is an evil in divided Cabinets, and distracted councils which can be no longer tolerated . . . I detailed, on a former occasion, that a dreadful commotion had distracted the public mind in Ireland; that a feverish agitation and unnatural excitement prevailed, to a degree scarcely credible, throughout the entire country. I attempted to show that social intercourse was poisoned there in its very springs; that family was divided against family, and man against his neighbour; that, in a word, the bonds of social life were almost dissevered, that the fountains of public justice were corrupted, that the spirit of discord walked openly abroad, and that an array of physical force was marshalled in defiance of all law, and to the imminent danger of the public peace. I ask, could this state of things be suffered to exist, and what course were we to pursue? Perhaps I shall be told, as I was on a former occasion, in forcible though familiar language, that this is the old story! that all this has been so for the last twenty years, and that therefore there is no reason for change. Why, this is the very reason for a change. It is because the evil is not casual and temporary, but permanent and inveterate,—it is because the detail of misery and outrage is nothing but 'the old story,' that I am contented to run the hazards of a change. We cannot

determine upon remaining idle spectators of the discord and disturbance of Ireland. The universal voice of the country declares that something must be done. I am but echoing the sentiments of all reasonable men, when I repeat that something must be done. I wish however to take nothing for granted, but to found my argument, not upon general assent, but upon unquestionable facts. I ask you to go back to a remoter period than it is generally the habit to embrace in these discussions; I ask you to examine the state of his Majesty's Government for the last thirty-five years, and to remark the bearing of the Catholic question upon that Government, the divisions it has created among our statesmen, the distraction it has occasioned among our councils, and the weakness it has consequently produced. I ask you, then, to observe what has been the course of Parliament for the same period. And, lastly, what has been the consequence of the divisions in the councils of the King, and of discussion between the two Houses of Parliament — the practical consequences as to Ireland." *

The Duke of Wellington's explanation in "the other

* Hansard xx. 729–731. Mr. Greville notes in his Diary, under the date of March 6th, that, "Peel brought on the Catholic question last night in a speech of four hours, which is said to be far the best he ever made. It is full of his never-failing fault, egotism, but certainly very able, plain, clear, and statesmanlike, and the peroration very eloquent. The University of Oxford should have been there in a body to hear the member they have rejected and him whom they have chosen in his place. The House was crammed to suffocation, and the lobby likewise. The cheering was loud and frequent, and often burst upon the impatient listener without."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 183.

House" was not less frank or unequivocal, and, in the course of it, he made a declaration which produced a profound impression. "I am one of those," he said,* "who have probably passed a longer period of my life engaged in war than most men, and principally, I may say, in civil war; and I must say this, that if I could avoid, by any sacrifice whatever, even one month of civil war in the country to which I am attached, I would sacrifice my life in order to do it." Having decided on granting the Irish Catholics the redress they had craved so long, the Duke showed his wonted firmness in acting on that decision. He allowed no wavering, no hesitation. He refused to dissolve Parliament, and appeal to the country. Ireland must be pacified; and nothing must be allowed to interpose in the way of its pacification. He was supported by Peel with equal tenacity of purpose; and both were encouraged by the unexpectedly large majorities obtained in the Commons. On the motion for going into Committee (March 6th), the majority was 188 (Ayes, 348; Noes, 160). The bill was brought in by Mr. Peel on the 10th, and read a first time. The second reading was carried on the 18th by 180, and the third reading, at four o'clock on the morning of the 31st, by a majority of 178.

In the Lords the Bill was introduced on the 31st by the Duke, and read a first time. The second reading was opposed by the Archbishops of Canterbury, York, and Armagh, and by the Bishops of London and Durham. The real leader of the Opposition, however,

* This was said on the second reading of the Bill.

then as always, was the ex-Chancellor, Eldon, who, "surrounded by a converted senate, severed from all his old colleagues, deserted by the peers who had hitherto cheered and supported him," still lifted up his voice against a measure he had resisted throughout his political career, and had consistently identified with the destruction of Church and State. But events were too strong for him. To his Cassandra-like prophecies of evil few gave heed; and on the 10th of April, the Bill passed its third reading by a majority of 213 to 109. This success was owing to the promptitude and disinterestedness with which the Whig Opposition came to the support of the Government; a promptitude and readiness which Sir Robert Peel in his 'Memoirs' gratefully acknowledges. "They cautiously abstained," he says, "from everything which might have thrown obstructions in our way, and in many instances forbore from pressing objections strongly felt to portions of the plan, in order that their general support of that plan as a whole might be cordial and effective."

The Government received no such assistance from the King. Even after giving his consent to the introduction of the measure, he made an effort to draw back On the evening of the 3rd of March, he summoned the Duke, the Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, and Mr. Peel to attend him at Windsor on the morrow; when he proceeded to express his regret at having accepted their advice on the Catholic question, and his wish to receive fuller particulars of the mode in which they proposed to settle it. These, when furnished by Mr. Peel, did not satisfy him; and he

objected, with special earnestness, to the proposed omission from the Oath of Supremacy of the words relating to the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope. Further explanations did not remove the royal scruples, and he declared he had no alternative but to retract his consent.* "After this expression of my feelings," he then said to Mr. Peel, "what course do you propose to take as my Minister?" Peel replied that after the announcement made in the Speech from the Throne, his vacating of his seat for Oxford, and the passing of the Bill for the Suppression of the Roman Catholic Association, he must entreat His Majesty at once to accept his resignation, and permit him on the following day to inform the House of Commons that unforeseen impediments prevented the Ministry from proposing to Parliament the measures that had been announced. The Duke of Wellington and the Lord Chancellor intimated their concurrence. Thereupon the King said that he would not be surprised at, nor could he censure their decision, and the interview, which had lasted about five hours, terminated. On their return to London the Ministers joined their colleagues, who were assembled at a Cabinet dinner, and informed them, much to their surprise, that they had ceased to be members of the Government. A sudden change, however, took place in the King's intentions. Having discovered, probably, that he could not recede without risking very serious disturbances, he wrote a letter, late in the evening of the 4th, to the Duke of Wellington, informing him that he anticipated so much

* 'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 345.

difficulty in the attempt to form another Administration, that he could not dispense with their services; that he must therefore desire them to withdraw their resignation, and that they were at liberty to proceed with the measures of which notice had been given in Parliament.

Before the Bill had passed the House of Commons, Lord Eldon made an effort to excite in the royal mind a resolution to refuse his assent to it. In an interview which he had with his sovereign, on the 28th, the latter appeared in no very kingly mood, and condescended to inveigh bitterly against his Ministers. "He complained that he had never seen the Bills,—that the condition of Ireland had not been taken into consideration,—that the Association Bill had been passed through both Houses before he had seen it,—that it was a very inefficient measure compared to those which he had in vain himself recommended,—that the other proposed measures gave him the greatest possible pain and uneasiness,—that he was in the state of a person with a pistol presented to his breast,—that he had nothing to fall back upon,—that his Ministers had threatened (I think he said twice, at the time of my seeing him) to resign,—if the measures were not proceeded in, and that he had said to them 'Go on,' when he knew not how to relieve himself from the state in which he was placed;—and that in one of these meetings, when resignation was threatened, he was urged to the sort of consent he gave, by what passed in the interview between him and his Ministers, till the interview and the talk had brought him into such a state, that he hardly

knew what he was about when he, after several hours, said, 'Go on.'" * Lord Eldon continues:—"After a great deal of time spent, in which His Majesty was sometimes silent—apparently uneasy—occasionally stating his distress; the hard usage he had received; his wish to extricate himself; that he knew not what to look to, what to fall back upon; that he was miserable beyond what he could express; I asked him whether his Majesty, so frequently thus expressing himself, would consent either to enjoin me, or to forbid me, considering or trying whether anything could be found or arranged upon which he *could* fall back." The King's courage was not to be stimulated; and, in truth, he was only acting a part, playing the *rôle* of the Protestant champion for the benefit of the aged ex-Chancellor. "'I neither enjoin you to do so,' he exclaimed, 'nor forbid you to do so; but, for God's sake, take care that I am not exposed to the humiliation of being again placed in such circumstances that I must submit again to pray of my present Ministers that they will remain with me.'" "He appeared to me," adds Lord Eldon,† "to be exceedingly miserable, and intimated that he would see me again."

On the 9th of April, the day before the Bill passed the Lords, a second interview took place between the King and his veteran ex-Chancellor. The royal jeremiad was dolorously repeated. The Coronation Oath was again made to do duty as a *cheval de bataille.*

* All this, of course, was the product of the King's lively imagination.

† Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon,' iii. 82–84.

The usual misstatements were put forward with as much confidence as if the King believed in their truth, and believed that Eldon would accept them as true. "What can I do?" whined this gracious sovereign; "what can I now fall back upon? I am miserable, wretched, my situation is dreadful; nobody about me to advise with. If I do give my assent, I'll go to the baths abroad, and from thence to Hanover; I'll return no more to England; I'll make no Roman Catholic Peers; I will not do what this Bill will enable me to do. I'll return no more—let them get a Catholic king in [the Duke of] Clarence." Lord Eldon adds:—"There were the strongest appearances certainly of misery. He, more than once, stopped my leaving him. When the time came that I was to go, he threw his arms round my neck and expressed great misery. . . . I certainly thought when I left him that he would express great difficulty when the Bill was proposed for the royal assent (great, but which would be overcome) about giving it." The old Earl did not appreciate his master's ability as a melodramatic actor. The King had got up the situation with great care, and no doubt he enjoyed it immensely. It was an excellent piece of stage-business; as was the whole affair from the beginning. Our impression is, that the King cared very little about Catholic Emancipation; that he pretended to oppose it in order to indulge his love of the theatrical. At all events, he gave his royal assent to the Bill, without any hesitation, the day after it passed the Lords. "After all I had heard in my visits," exclaims Lord Eldon, with hands and eyes uplifted; "not a day's delay! God bless us, and His Church!"

As for Peel's share in the concession of this great measure of justice to the Roman Catholics, it seems to us to have been, from first to last, in every respect worthy of an enlightened and honourable statesman; and we see no reason to doubt his truth and candour, when he says:*—"I can with truth affirm, as I do solemly affirm in the presence of Almighty God, 'to whom all hearts lie open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,' that in advising and promoting the measures of 1829 I was swayed by no fear except the fear of public calamity, and that I acted throughout on a deep conviction that those measures were not only conducive to the general welfare, but that they had become imperatively necessary in order to avert from interests which had a special claim upon my support—the interests of the Church, and of institutions connected with the Church—an imminent and increasing danger. It may be that I was unconsciously influenced by motives less perfectly pure and disinterested—by the sweet satisfaction of being,

> '. . . . when the waves went high,
> A daring pilot in extremity.'

But at any rate it was no ignoble ambition which prompted me to bear the brunt of a desperate conflict, and at the same time to submit to the sacrifice of of everything dear to a public man, excepting the approval of his own conscience, and the hope of ultimate justice."

* 'Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel,' i. 365, 366.

III.

Some changes took place in the *personnel* of the administration before the close of the session. Sir Charles Wetherell, who had opposed the Relief Bill, was succeeded by Sir James Scarlett (afterwards Lord Abinger) as Attorney-General; and the Duke of Clarence retiring from the office of Lord High Admiral, in which he had given offence by his shows and cruises to the Premier, a rigid economist, was replaced by Lord Melville, who became First Lord of the Admiralty. The Government met Parliament, in the session of 1830, with diminished forces. It had offended the ultra-Tories by passing the Emancipation Act, and it could not hope for support from the Whigs, as it was pledged to oppose Parliamentary Reform. With the country it was not popular; for the country was daily evincing a stronger inclination towards a liberal policy. It had encountered no open dangers, however, when, on the 26th of June, George the Fourth died, at the age of sixty-eight, after an illness of some duration. He was succeeded by William, Duke of Clarence, who was known to be fond of popularity, and to carry affability of manner to the very verge of an unbecoming familiarity. The demise of the Crown rendered necessary the dissolution of Parliament (July 23rd). Almost immediately afterwards the French Revolution broke out; the elder

branch of the Bourbons was deposed; and the Duke of Orleans ascended the throne as Louis Philippe, King of the French. The excitement of the "three glorious days of July," which seemed to involve a triumph of liberalism over reaction, extended to Great Britain, and so largely influenced the elections that in the new House of Commons the majority was opposed to the Wellington Cabinet, and in favour of an amendment of the representative system.

In September, 1830, at the opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, Mr. Huskisson was accidentally killed, and his death removed the only obstacle on the Duke of Wellington's part to a junction with the Canningites. He therefore communicated with Lord Palmerston, who, with the Grants and William Lamb, represented that section, but failed to secure his support. The Canningites, by the force of events, and, it may be added, as a necessary consequence of their principles, were drifting towards the Whigs, and saw no safety in joining a Government which was pledged to the lips against reform. The new Parliament was opened by the King in person on the 2nd of November. No division took place upon the Address; but, in the course of the debate in the Upper House, the Premier made a declaration which materially helped to define the attitude of parties. It was that of an optimist, who was fully convinced of the excellence of every existing institution. "I am fully convinced," said the Duke,* "that the country possesses at the present moment a legislature

* 'Hansard,' 3rd series, i. 52.

which answers all the good purposes of legislation, and this to a greater degree than any legislature ever has answered in any country whatever. I will go farther, and say, that the legislature and the system of representation possess the full and entire confidence of the country, deservedly possess that confidence, and the discussions in the legislature have a very great influence over the opinions of the country. I will go still further, and say, that if at the present moment I had the duty imposed upon me of forming a legislature for any country, and particularly a country like this, in possession of great property of various descriptions, I do not mean to assert that I would form such a legislature as we possess now—for the nature of man was incapable of reaching it at once—but my great endeavour would be to form some description of legislature which would produce the same results. The representation of the people at present contains a large body of the property of the country, in which the landed interests have a preponderating influence. Under these circumstances, I am not prepared to bring forward any measure of the description alluded to by the noble lord (Earl Grey). I am not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of this nature, but I will at once declare that, as far as I am concerned, as long as I hold any station in the government of the country, I shall always feel it my duty to resist such a measure when proposed by others."

When these words were read by the public next day, men rubbed their eyes in astonishment. They asked themselves whether the Duke recollected the existence

of Old Sarum, a few acres of scanty herbage, where no living creature dwelt, which, nevertheless, was "represented" by two members in the "People's House." They wondered whether he thought a legislature perfect in which Leeds and Manchester were without a voice. The Duke's colleagues, or, at least, the more prudent of them, hastened to intimate that they did not share the absolute confidence of their leader. Peel, with his usual caution, went only so far as to declare that he could express no opinion on a subject which as yet was wholly undefined; but Sir George Murray avowed that he was in favour of some moderate reform. The Duke's next step was not less impolitic. A certain Alderman Key had been elected to serve as Lord Mayor, and the King and Queen had consented to grace his inaugural banquet on the 9th of November. Three days before, however, the sapient citizen addressed a letter to the Duke, warning him that a number of "desperate characters" intended making an attack upon him near the Guildhall, and suggesting that if he came he should come attended by a strong military guard. The next night, Saturday, Mr. Peel wrote to the Lord Mayor to state that the King and Queen would postpone their visit. Ministers appear to have argued that even if the Duke absented himself some outbreak might take place, which, in the crowded state of the streets on the occasion of a royal visit, would result in terrible confusion, and perhaps loss of life. But against such an outbreak the police should have been able to provide; and at any rate it would have been wiser to risk something, if risk there were, than to throw all London and the country into a panic.

Men's minds being excited by the events which had transpired in France, they naturally supposed that a royal progress, for which extensive preparations had been made, would not have been abandoned but for the discovery of some alarming plot. The Funds, which the Duke of Wellington's disastrous speech had lowered from 84 to 80, fell to 77.* Careful citizens fortified their doors with new bolts and bars, lined their shutters with iron plates, and laid in stores of arms and ammunition, in expectation of a general revolt of the proletariat.† Before the end of the week, the folly of the scare was apparent to everybody, and then everybody felt indignant with the Government for subjecting them to the humiliation.‡ The opinion of the more thoughtful was expressed by Mr. Brougham, when he said: — "I wish to Heaven that I had not lived to see the day when the forgetfulness of the people to the merits of the soldier, and the forgetfulness of the soldier to his own proper sphere of greatness, display to England, to Europe, and to the world, an occasion when he cannot accom-

* "It was expected that there would be a great riot, and preparations were made to meet it. Troops were called up to London, and a large body of civil power put in motion. People had come in from the country in the morning, and everything indicated a disturbance. . . . The police (Peel's new police, organised under his direction), who are a magnificent set of fellows, behave very well, and it seems pretty evident that these troubles are not very serious, and will soon be put an end to. . . . Every sort of ridicule and abuse was heaped upon the Government, the Lord Mayor, and all who had any share in putting off the King's visit to the City; very droll caricatures were circulated."—'The Greville Memoirs,' i. 54, 55, 56.

† Molesworth, i. 50.

‡ Martineau, ii. 18.

pany the sovereign on his journey into the heart of an attached and loyal population." *

* This incident suggested to Moore his satirical lines entitled 'Advertisement':—

"Missing or lost, last Sunday night
A Waterloo coin, whereon was trac'd
Th' inscription, 'Courage!' in letters bright.
Though a little by rust of years defac'd.

The metal thereof is rough and hard,
And ('tis thought of late) mix'd up with brass;
But it bears the stamp of Fame's award,
And through all Posterity's hands will pass.

How it was lost, God only knows,
But certain City thieves, they say,
Broke in on the owner's evening doze,
And filch'd this 'gift of Gods' away!'

One ne'er could, of course, the Cits suspect,
If we hadn't, that evening, chanc'd to see,
At the robb'd man's door a *mare* elect,
With an ass to keep her company.

Whosoever of this lost treasure knows,
Is begg'd to state all facts about it,
As the owner can't well face his foes,
Nor even his friends, just now, without it.

And if Sir Clod will bring it back,
Like a trusty Baronet, wise and able,
He shall have a ride on the whitest hack
That's left in old King George's stable."

The "trusty baronet" was Alderman Sir Claudius Hunter, who was fond

Mr. Brougham had given notice of his intention to introduce a Reform Bill, by which he proposed to give votes to all copyholders, leaseholders, and householders; to allot members to Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, and other large towns; to deprive each nomination borough of one of its members; to disfranchise the sub-voters in towns, but not in counties; to allow persons in towns to vote after six months' residence; to confine the polling to a single day; and reduce the number of members in the House to five hundred. The expectation was general that, on this motion, which was fixed for the 15th, the Ministry would be beaten. But it happened that, on the day previous, a motion for a Select Committee to examine the accounts connected with the Civil List, was brought forward by Sir H. Parnell; and, in spite of the vigorous opposition of Sir Robert Peel,* carried by a majority of twenty-nine (233 to 204). Ministers immediately determined on resigning,

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of disporting himself on a steed of "dazzling whiteness." The following epigram appeared in the *John Bull* of August 16th, 1830:—

THE ROYAL WONDERS.

Two miracles at once! Compell'd by fate,
His tarnish'd throne the Bourbon doth vacate;
While English William—a diviner thing,—
Of his free pleasure hath put off the king;
The forms of distant old respect lets pass,
And melts his crown into the common mass.
Health to fair France and fine regeneration!
But England's is the nobler abdication.

Charles Lamb.

* By the death of his father, a few weeks before, Mr. Peel had succeeded to the baronetcy and a very large fortune.

without waiting for a defeat on the Reform question. The latter would necessitate the appointment of a Cabinet pledged to carry out Mr. Brougham's plan, or submit another. By choosing the former, they exhibited their opponents as assailants of the royal prerogative, while to the King they themselves would appear as its martyrs. Accordingly, on the evening of the 16th, the Duke in the Upper House, and Sir Robert Peel in the Lower, announced the dissolution of the Government.* Lord Althorp, the Whig leader in the Lower House, immediately requested Mr. Brougham to defer his motion, which could not properly be discussed while the Government of the country was in an unsettled state. Brougham professed a proper amount of reluctance, but vowing he would ne'er consent, consented; adding, however, that as no changes which might take place in the Administration could possibly affect his individual position, he should bring forward his motion on the 25th, under any circumstances.

Here we may pause to note some additional details of the career of this extraordinary man, who, for versatility of talents, multiplicity of acquirements, and instability of

* Sydney Smith wrote:—"Never was any administration so completely and so suddenly destroyed; and, I believe, entirely by the Duke's declaration, made, I suspect, in perfect ignorance of the state of public feeling and opinion."—'Life and Letters,' ii. 313. Lord Grenville to the Duke of Buckingham:—"It has been most unfortunate for him, and not less so for the question. Absolute resistance, *in limine*, to any reform, is manifestly no longer possible."—'Courts and Cabinets of William IV.,' etc., i. 146. "It is universally believed that Peel pressed the Civil List question for the purpose of being beaten upon it, and going out on that rather than on Reform."—'The Greville Memoirs,' ii. 64.

character, has hardly ever been equalled. He possessed indeed, almost every intellectual gift except judgment and humour. His lack of the former quality accounts for many of the ill-advised, and his lack of the latter for many of the extravagant actions, which involved him in so much and such well-deserved censure. His eloquence was copious, vehement, impetuous; his knowledge of all subjects, and all times and places, marvellous; as a scientific inquirer, he earned no inconsiderable distinction; his style as a writer was full, rapid, and animated; he displayed a remarkable power of mastering the most difficult questions, and a not less remarkable power of explaining them so that they became intelligible to the most ordinary understanding; on various occasions he manifested the truest and deepest popular sympathies; his appearances in the honourable capacity of a law reformer were successful; he advocated the education of the people with a fervour which was almost passionate; his oratory was prompt to direct its thunder against bigotry and oppression; and yet when his influence in the House of Commons was at its height, when his power over the masses was most undisputed, those who knew him best were disposed to trust him least. And, in truth, he had no sobriety of temper, no singleness of purpose, no capacity of moderation or patience. He was the victim of a colossal vanity; of an irritability that vented itself alike on friends and foes; of a jealousy that knew no bounds, and a selfishness that took no regard of decency. "Brougham," wrote Sir Samuel Romilly, "is a man of the most splendid talents and the most extensive ac-

quirements, and he has used the ample means which he possesses most usefully for mankind. It would be difficult to overrate the services which he has rendered the cause of the slaves in the West Indies, or that of the friends to the extension of knowledge and education among the poor, or to praise too highly his endeavours to serve the oppressed inhabitants of Poland. How much is it to be lamented that his want of judgment and of prudence should prevent his great talents, and such good intentions, from being as great a blessing to mankind as they ought to be." This is the reflection which naturally suggests itself to any student of Brougham's chequered career. We acknowledge the good which he accomplished; but regret that it was so little when compared with his abilities and opportunities. Who but must deplore so stupendous a waste of genius and character?

Henry Brougham was born in Edinburgh on the 19th of September, 1778; was educated at the High School along with Jeffrey and Walter Scott; and completed his education at the University. Scientific studies had an early fascination for him; and when he was only seventeen, he communicated to the Royal Society of London an ingenious paper on "the Inflexion, Reflexion, and Colours of Light." In 1800 he was called to the Scottish Bar, and attained distinction as a speaker at the meetings of the then celebrated Speculative Society. Two years later he assisted in founding the 'Edinburgh Review,' to which, for a considerable period, he contributed extensively, treating of every subject, and discussing all with equal ability and confi-

dence, though certainly not with equal success. His "slashing" article on Lord Byron's 'Hours of Idleness,' elicited the strenuous satire of 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' In 1803 he attracted the favourable notice of the political world by his 'Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers.' The Scotch Courts not offering a field sufficiently wide for his restless energies or his ambition, he qualified for the English bar, and in 1808 began to practise in the Queen's Bench and on the Northern Circuit. The value of such an adherent was soon detected by the Whigs, and he was at once brought into parliament as member for Camelford. His maiden speech, on a question connected with the Earl of Chatham's Walcheren Expedition (March 5th, 1810), failed to satisfy the expectations formed of him; but before the end of the session he had fully vindicated his powers, had conquered an influential position in the House of Commons, and virtually acted as the leader of the Opposition. He necessarily came into frequent collision with Canning, against whose fine wit, however, his strong and somewhat coarse invective was not equally matched.* But his speeches upon Negro Slavery and the Orders in Council were singularly able efforts. In 1812 he was invited to contest Liverpool, along with Mr. Conway, against Canning and General Gascoigne, but was de-

* "When Brougham bellows against him, a Bull of Bashan, the Secretary waits till his horns are lowered for the death-blow, and then stepping aside, he plants with graceful dexterity the fine-tempered weapon in the spine of the mighty Brute."—'Recreations of Christopher North,' i. 155.

feated, and he remained excluded from Parliament until the spring of 1816, when he obtained a seat for the borough of Winchelsea. "It may be conceived," says Lord Campbell, a not too friendly biographer,* "in what a state of repletion Brougham was after a retention which had endured nearly four consecutive years. Writing frequent pamphlets, and countless articles for reviews, magazines, and newspapers, had brought him some occasional relief, aided by after-dinner speeches, and copious ebullitions of rhetoric at public meetings; but there remained an immense conglomeration of ideas in his mind, which could only be vomited forth in the House of Commons. Accordingly he made a long speech against the Address to the Crown, the night when he first took his seat for Winchelsea, and subsequently he spoke as much during the single session, as would be a sufficient contribution to debate from an ordinary man during a long parliamentary life." In the session of 1817 he rendered the cause of constitutional government good service by his bold and vigorous opposition to the "Six Acts," and the other arbitrary measures of the Liverpool and Castlereagh Cabinet.

He had not, however, as yet attained the place in popular estimation which he desired to occupy. He had worked hard; and as a powerful debater and a man of many and various gifts, was either greatly feared or greatly admired; but he had not acquired an influence with the public sufficient to overcome the prejudices or

* Lord Campbell, 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' ix. 283.

apprehensions of his own party. He was willing enough and able enough to move the world if he could only find a lever. That was put into his hands at last by his appointment as law-adviser, and on the death of George the 3rd, as Attorney-General to Queen Caroline. In this capacity it fell to him to conduct her defence against the proceedings instituted by the Ministry; and his courage, dexterity, vigour, and eloquence, being exercised in a popular cause, soon made him the most popular man in England. The following peroration to the great speech which he delivered on the 3rd of October, 1820, merits the applause it received, and may be taken as a fair sample of Brougham's oratorical style:—

"Such, my Lords, is the case now before you! Such is the evidence in support of this measure *—evidence inadequate to prove a debt—impotent to deprive of a civil right—ridiculous to convict of the lowest offence—scandalous if brought forward to support a charge of the highest nature which the law knows—monstrous to ruin the honour, to blast the name of an English Queen! What shall I say, then, if this is the proof by which an act of judicial legislation, a parliamentary sentence, an *ex post facto* law, is sought to be passed against this defenceless woman? My Lords, I pray you to pause. I do earnestly beseech you to take heed! You are standing upon the brink of a precipice—beware! It will go forth your judgment, if sentence shall go against the Queen. But it will be the only judgment you ever pro-

* The notorious Bill of Pains and Penalties.

nounced, which, instead of reaching its object, will return and bound back upon those who give it. Save the country, my Lords, from the horrors of this catastrophe—save yourselves from the peril—rescue that country, of which you are the ornaments, but in which you can flourish no longer, when severed from the people, than the blossom when cut off from the roots and the stem of the tree. Save that country, that you may continue to adorn it—save the Crown, which is in jeopardy—the Aristocracy which is shaken—save the Altar, which must stagger with the blow that rends its kindred Throne! You have said, my Lords, you have willed—the Church and the King have willed—that the Queen should be deprived of its solemn service. She has instead of that solemnity, the heartfelt prayers of the people. She wants no prayers of mine. But I do here pour forth my humble supplications at the Throne of Mercy, that that mercy may be poured down upon the people, in a larger measure than the merits of its rulers may deserve, and that your hearts may be turned to justice."*

There was no more popular man in England than Brougham after the successful issue of the Queen's trial. Gold boxes rained upon him, as once they rained upon the elder Pitt. His bust was hawked about the streets for sale; and the beershops adopted the "Brougham's

* "He delivered the concluding prayer very solemnly and impressively in the well-remembered attitude of the Presbyterian clergy in Scotland, where they bless the congregation at the conclusion of public worship—raising both his opened palms above his head at the same height, and holding them motionless till his voice ceased."—LORD CAMPBELL, 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' ix. 320.

Head" as an attractive sign. His practice at the bar largely increased, and in all causes of great popular interest he was invariably retained. As a necessary consequence his influence in the House of Commons was largely augmented; and he was not at all behind the foremost member of the Opposition. For some years he continued his usual activity in debate, taking as his principal subjects Slavery, Education, Public Charities, and Law Reform, and making his mark on each. Catholic Emancipation found in him a steady advocate. Even his severest critics must acknowledge that, great as were his vacillations, marvellous as was his restlessness, he was at least fixed and consistent in the House or out of the House, at the bar or on the platform, in his hatred of oppression and defence of the oppressed. Such was the case in his advocacy of Mr. Smith, a Wesleyan missionary, who, for his zeal in the conversion of the negroes of Demerara, had been brought before a court-martial, and sentenced to be shot (1824). The speech which he made on this occasion he himself considered his masterpiece.

When Canning formed his government in 1827, he offered Brougham the dignity of Chief Baron of the Exchequer; but as it was unaccompanied by a peerage, and would have removed him from the parliamentary arena, he declined it. He gave a very cordial support to Canning, however, during his brief enjoyment of power, and sincerely lamented the brilliant statesman's death. He went into active Opposition when the Duke of Wellington became Premier, and objected to the union of civil and military power in the Prime Minister as un-

constitutional. "Let it not be supposed," he added, "that I am inclined to exaggerate. I entertain no fear of slavery being introduced by the power of the sword. It would demand a more powerful man, even, than the Duke of Wellington to effect such an object. The noble Duke may take the army, he may take the navy, he may take the mitre, he may take the Great Seal. I will make the noble Duke a present of them all. Let him come on with his whole form, sword in hand, against the Constitution, and the energies of the people of this country will defeat his utmost efforts. Therefore, I am perfectly convinced that there will be no unconstitutional attack on the liberties of the people. These are not the times for such an attempt. There have been periods when the country heard with dismay that 'the soldier was abroad.' That is not the case now. Let the soldier be abroad; in the present age he can do nothing. There is another person abroad—a less important person in the eyes of some; an insignificant person, whose labours have tended to produce this state of things. *The schoolmaster is abroad!*"

The session of 1829 was, as we have seen, entirely occupied with the great measure of Catholic Emancipation; and as a matter of course, Brougham, like the other Whig leaders, gave Peel his vigorous and earnest support. At the General Election which followed the death of George the 4th, he came forward as an advocate of Parliamentary Reform, and accepted an invitation from the liberals of Yorkshire to contest the county in the Liberal interest, in conjunction with Lord Morpeth. The struggle was virtually between Brougham and

Stuart Wortley; and though the latter had great personal and family advantages, and the county representative had long been considered an appendage of the great aristocratic houses, Brougham, by his eloquence, his energy, and his popularity secured the victory. The election created an extraordinary interest, and its issue exercised an important influence on the fortunes of the Reform movement. As for the victor, in the new House of Commons he certainly became one of the most conspicuous figures.

We now resume our narrative. On receiving the resignation of the Duke and his colleague, the King summoned Earl Grey, who was the recognised leader of the Whig party, and by his long parliamentary services, unblemished integrity, and elevated character commanded the respect of the nation. Having obtained the King's permission to make Parliamentary Reform a Cabinet measure, the Earl proceeded to form his Administration. Lord Althorp, a nobleman of great honesty but very moderate abilities, became Chancellor of the Exchequer; Viscounts Melbourne, Palmerston, and Goderich, Secretaries for the Home, Foreign, and Colonial Departments respectively; the Marquis of Lansdowne, President of the Council; the Earl of Durham, Lord Privy Seal; Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Auckland, Master of the Mint; Charles Grant, President of the Board of Trade; the Duke of Richmond, Postmaster-General; and Lord Holland, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Earl of Carlisle was also included in the Cabinet, but

without office. Lord John Russell, who had been a consistent advocate of Parliamentary Reform, accepted the minor office of Paymaster of the Forces. Some difficulty was experienced by the Premier in providing for Brougham, who, as the real, if not the ostensible leader in the House of Commons, could not be overlooked; and as the head of a considerable body of followers, could make or mar the Whig ministry. The post of Attorney-General he resolutely declined; but was willing to accept the Mastership of the Rolls, which would have enabled him to retain his seat in the Commons. The King, however, objected, that in such a position, as member for Yorkshire, and with the Reform question in his hands, his power would prove a constant menace to both the Ministry and the Crown; and suggested that he should receive the Lord Chancellorship. Brougham felt that his acceptance of even this splendid dignity would entail upon him considerable sacrifices; the loss of his large professional practice and of his influence as a Parliamentary leader. But when it was represented to him that his refusal would jeopardise the formation of a Whig government, he consented; though, having practised always at the common-law bar, he was almost entirely ignorant of the mode of procedure in Chancery.

The difficult and delicate task of framing a Reform Bill was entrusted by Earl Grey to a committee consisting of Lord Durham, Lord Duncannon, Lord John Russell, and Sir James Graham; and they quickly prepared a measure on the basis of a plan submitted by Lord John, which duly went before the Cabinet. Sweeping as it

was, the Cabinet accepted it; concluding that in the agitated condition of the country, which was then suffering greatly from pauperism, agricultural distress, excessive taxation, and social uneasiness, no milder remedy would be effectual. The Bill having been carefully prepared, Lord John Russell, though not a Cabinet minister, was chosen to introduce it.*

It was on the 1st of March that Lord John submitted the details of the great measure which, for nearly half a century, has placed the chief political power in the hands of the middle class, to an expectant House of Commons. Many still living remember the excitement of that memorable day; the joyful surprise with which the reformers, the dread and horror with which the anti-

* "The selection of Lord John Russell to introduce the bill was not only a wise, but an almost necessary choice on the part of the government. Lord Althorp—good-natured, courteous; thoroughly honest, a sincere, tried, and enthusiastic reformer, but feeble and incapable as a legislator, and as a speaker so hesitating, tedious, and embarrassed, that it was painful to listen to him—was no match for such antagonists as Sir Robert Peel, Sir C. Wetherell, Mr. Croker, and other able debaters, who sat on the opposite side of the House, and were sure to offer the most pertinacious opposition to the intended measure. Other members of the Cabinet rather accepted the bill as a concession to the demands of the people that could no longer be safely denied than as a measure desirable on its own account. Others, again, had not the weight and the moderation which the task required. It therefore devolved almost inevitably on Lord John Russell, whose connection with the house of Bedford—identified with most of the great struggles for English liberty in modern times—gave him great weight; whose known courage, patience, and perseverance, and tried attachment to the cause of reform, but above all, whose virtuous and noble character pointed him out as pre-eminently fitted to take charge of the measure on which the government deliberately staked its existence, and on the strength of which it claimed and received the support of the great body of the nation."—MOLESWORTH, 'History of England,' i. 71.

reform party, witnessed the unfolding of a project so bold and decisive. It had its defects, as we all see now; but not the less was it conceived in a statesman-like spirit highly creditable to its projectors. It dealt an effectual blow at the "borough-mongering" disease which had preyed so long on the vitality of the constitution. As Lord John Russell said, "Representation, not Nomination, was its principle."* It cut away no fewer

* This, indeed, was the peculiar merit of the Bill, which, in all other respects, was, as Lord Grey called it, "an aristocratic measure;" and cleared the ground for future reform, rather than did anything effectual in the way of reform itself. But, after all, the great, dominant, and pernicious evil was that "borough-mongering" which the Bill proposed to extinguish. Sydney Smith, in one of his liveliest passages (*Works*, iii. 126), has portrayed the evil:—"The thing I cannot and will not bear, is this:—What right has this Lord, or that Marquis, to buy ten seats in Parliament, in the shape of boroughs, and there to make laws to govern me? And how are these means of power redistributed? The eldest son of my lord is just come from Eton—he knows a good deal about Æneas and Dido, Apollo and Daphne—and that is all: and to this boy his father gives a six-hundredth part of the power of making laws, as he would give him a horse, or a double-barrel gun. Then Vellum, the steward, is put in, an admirable man;—he has raised the estates—watched the progress of the family Road and Canal Bills—and Vellum shall help to rule over the people of Israel. A neighbouring country gentleman, Mr. Pumpkin, hunts with my Lord—opens him a gate or two, while the hounds are running—dines with my Lord—agrees with my Lord—wishes he could rival the Southdown sheep of my Lord—and upon Pumpkin is conferred a portion of the government. Then there is a distant relation of the same name, in the County Militia, with white teeth, who calls up the carriage at the Opera, and is always wishing O'Connell was hanged, drawn, and quartered—then a barrister, who has written an article in the 'Quarterly,' and is very likely to speak, and refute McCulloch; and these five people, in whose nomination I have no more agency than I have in the nomination of the toll-keepers of the Bosphorus, are to make laws for me and my family—to put their hands in my purse, and to sway the future destinies of this country; and when the neighbours step in, and beg permission to say a

than sixty "rotten boroughs;" it abolished 158 borough seats. Fifty-four additional members were given to the counties; eight to the parishes and suburbs of London; and thirty-four to the large towns. The total number of representatives was reduced to 596.

The debate which followed the introduction of the Bill extended over seven nights, and brought to their feet between seventy and eighty members, whose speeches indicated a very wide diversity of opinion, and incidentally proved that parties in the House were very equally balanced. Sir Robert Peel addressed the House on the third night, in an ingenious and careful speech, dealing chiefly with side issues, and avoiding the main arguments in favour of reform. He took occasion to state his disposition to concede "alterations in our representative system, founded on safe principles, abjuring all confiscation, and limited in their degree." What these alterations were he did not explain; but, at all events, he made it clear that his position was not that of an Eldon or a Wetherell. No division was taken on the first reading. The second reading, on the 21st of March, was carried by a majority of only one (302 to 301). The excitement out of doors was intense. A cry went throughout the land for "the Bill—the whole Bill—and nothing but the Bill." Political Unions organised

few words before these persons are chosen, there is an universal cry of ruin, confusion, and destruction;—we have become a great people under Vellum and Pumpkin—under Vellum and Pumpkin our ships have covered the ocean—under Vellum and Pumpkin our armies have secured the strength of the hills—to turn out Vellum and Pumpkin is not Reform but Revolution."

demonstrations in every town; and staid, respectable, well-to-do citizens freely discussed the necessity that might arise for refusing to pay taxes, and advancing upon London in support of the King and his Ministers. "On the coast of Sussex," we read, "ten thousand men declared themselves ready to march at any moment. Northumberland was prepared in like manner; Yorkshire was up and awake; and, in short, it might be said that the nation was ready to go up to London, if wanted. When the mighty processions of these Unions marched to their meeting-grounds, the anti-reformers observed with a shudder that the towns were at the mercy of these mobs. The towns were at their mercy; but they were not mobs; and never were the good citizens more safe." Easy is it, of course, to condemn these proceedings, but exceptional acts are necessary in exceptional times; and the steady resistance of the borough-mongering interest, and of the classes whose advantage was involved in the continuance of things as they were, could not be overcome except by the stress and strain of a great popular movement.

It was expected by many that Ministers would have resigned after the vote on the second reading; but if it had become evident that the Bill could not be carried through the House, it was not less evident, from the temper of the country, that no measure less comprehensive or less definite would be accepted by the people. A ministerial resignation would only have resulted in a popular outbreak. The alternative was the dissolution of Parliament, if the King could be induced to consent to it, and the Opposition struck a blow which would

justify it. Such a blow was an amendment moved in Committee by General Gascoygne, one of the members for Liverpool, on the 19th of April, "That it is the opinion of this House that the total number of knights, citizens, and burgesses returned to parliament for that part of the United Kingdom called England and Wales, ought not to be diminished." This was carried against the Government by 299 to 291; and on the morning of the 22nd the Government were defeated on a question of Supply by a majority of 22. The Opposition desired, by this manœuvre, to prevent the Ministry from resorting to an immediate dissolution, which they had every reason to deprecate. They knew, too, that on this question the King sided with them; and they hoped by their action to keep him firm. In which case, either the Ministry would be forced to resign, or to accept a compromise which would emasculate the obnoxious Bill. At no time was the country nearer the brink of an awful peril. When, at a later date, the earth seemed to shake with the march of multitudes, and the heavens to ring with their shouts, when the peers trembled in their "gilded chambers," and to timid minds "the day of the Lord was at hand," the Ministers were unmoved, for they knew that success was certain, and could afford to bide their time. But on the 22nd of April everything was unsettled, problematical, vague. The public, unaware of the emergency, could give no support; and the ultimate decision of the King could not be forecasted.

On the night of the 21st, Lord Wharncliffe, with a view of intimidating the Government, asked Lord Grey in the Upper Chamber, whether the King had been

advised to dissolve Parliament. The Premier declined to answer; and Lord Wharncliffe then gave notice that on the morrow he should move an address to the Crown, remonstrating against such a proposed exercise of the royal prerogative. It was apparent to the Ministers that no time was to be lost in enforcing upon the King his acceptance of their resignation, with all its consequences, or in obtaining his consent to a dissolution. The next morning Earl Grey repaired to the Palace, where he was joined by Lord Brougham; and the two Ministers pressed upon the King the necessity of going down and dissolving Parliament that very afternoon. For some hours, says one authority, there appeared little chance of a decision; but at length the perplexed sovereign, anxious to preserve his popularity as the "patriot King," began to incline towards the views of his Ministers. He was yielding, though not without reluctance, when intelligence arrived of something that had been said in the House of Lords on the impossibility of his actually dissolving Parliament, though his constitutional right to do so could not be questioned. What! he exclaimed; did they dare to meddle with his prerogative? He had given his promise, and would now go at once, that very moment, and dissolve Parliament by his own voice. "As soon," added the Minister, "as the royal carriages could be got ready." "Never mind the carriages; send for a hackney-coach," replied the King; and the saying, spreading far and wide, greatly increased his favour with the people.*

* Various accounts are given of this celebrated scene. The reader may compare Martineau, Roebuck, Molesworth, Alison and Lord Campbell. We have adopted what seems to us the most probable version.

Lord Durham, who appears also to have been present, now hastened to the palace-gate, where he found the Lord Chancellor's carriage waiting, and, entering it, he drove with all speed to Lord Albemarle's, the Master of the Horse. His lordship was enjoying a late breakfast; but sprang to his feet at Lord Durham's unexpected appearance, inquiring anxiously as to its cause. "You must have the King's carriages ready instantly." "The King's carriages! Very well. I will just finish my breakfast." "Finish your breakfast! Not so! You must not lose a moment. The King ought to be at the House." "Lord bless me! is there a revolution?" "Not as yet; but there may be if you stay to finish your breakfast." The half-eaten meal was left; and in a few minutes the royal carriages were at the palace-gate. Soon they were rolling through the streets, amid the shout of excited crowds, whom some vague rumour of great events had speedily drawn together.

Meantime, the two Houses were contributing their part to this stirring drama. The Commons had assembled in an eager and expectant mood, which had its effect upon the Speaker, disturbing and agitating him in an extraordinary degree. Several members rose at once; they contradicted each other; and when the Speaker summoned courage to interfere, disregarded his injunctions. Lord John Russell attempted to restore order; but his voice was lost in the din. Sir Richard Vyvyan, a Tory of the old school, at length contrived to obtain a hearing, and was in the full flow of an angry oration, when the sudden roar of cannon announced to the startled House that the King was on his way. Not

a word could be understood, for the cheers that mingled with shouts of laughter and cries of disapprobation, interrupted at regular intervals by the boom of artillery. At one moment, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Althorp, and Sir Francis Burdett were all gesticulating in dumb show, while their friends made frantic efforts to procure a hearing for them. Althorp moved that Burdett should be heard; but the Speaker stammered out that "Peel was in possession of the House to speak on that motion." As for Sir Robert, he lost his usual self-command, and attacked the Government with extraordinary vehemence. He was still speaking, "in the midst of every sort of noise and tumult," when the Usher of the Black Rod appeared at the Bar to summon the "faithful Commons" to the royal presence. Sir Robert continued to speak, with persistent vehemence, even after Black Rod's appearance; and the members near him could compel him to take his seat only by strenuous pulling at the skirts of his coat.

The scene in the Lords is described by Lord Campbell, who was an eye-witness. The Earl of Mansfield having given notice for this memorable day of a motion hostile to Reform, the Lord Chancellor (Brougham) manœuvred to prevent him from bringing it forward. He continued hearing an appeal until a late hour, and then retired, with the intention of not returning till he should enter in the King's procession. But no sooner had he gone, than Lord Mansfield, according to the privilege of the peers, moved that the Earl of Shaftesbury should take the chair as Speaker. This was done. Lord Wharncliffe then rose to move

an address to the King, praying that he would not dissolve the present Parliament. The Ministerialists interrupted him, and "at least five peers were on their legs at one time trying to gain a hearing, and looking as if resolved to come to blows."* Lord Wharncliffe ultimately succeeded in making his motion, and the danger was great that it might be carried by acclamation, when the re-appearance of the Chancellor compelled Lord Shaftesbury to vacate the woolsack. In a passionate tone of voice, Brougham exclaimed:—"I never yet heard that the Crown ought not to dissolve Parliament whenever it thought fit, particularly at a moment when the House of Commons had resorted to the extreme step of refusing the supplies." Loud cries of "Hear! Hear! The King! the King!" arose, and altogether an "immense confusion" prevailed.

Thinking he had checkmated the Opposition, the Chancellor obeyed a summons from Black Rod to attend the King,† and hastily retired. The Tory Lords again placed Lord Shaftesbury on the woolsack, and Lord Mansfield began to pour out a furious declamation against the dissolution and the Reform Bill, when shouts of "The King! the King! God save the King!" were once more heard; and the large doors on the right of the throne being opened, his Majesty entered, accompanied by the Chancellor and other great officers, and seating himself on the throne, looked round

* Lord Campbell, 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' ix. 395.

† 'The Greville Memoirs,' ii. 137; Hansard, iv. 153.

to the quarter whence the disturbance had proceeded, with evident feelings of anger. The Commons were then summoned, and on their arrival the King began:—"My Lords and Gentlemen,—I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing the Parliament, with a view to its immediate dissolution,"—pronouncing this last word, it is said, with deep emphasis and obvious exultation. Thus, "after a scene of bellowing and roaring and gnashing of teeth, on the part of the adversary, in both Houses, which it was almost frightful to look at,"* terminated the first Parliament of William the 4th.

"We do not follow the fashion of the French," says Lord Campbell, "who on these occasions bellow out 'Vive le Roi!' or 'Vive l'Empereur!' (as it may be) while his French Majesty is still sitting on his throne; but when our Sailor King was returning to his Palace he was saluted with cries of 'Well done, old boy!—*served* them right! Three cheers for the King and Reform. Hip, hip, hurra!' And he seemed much delighted with the applause which he received."†

The Government went to the country with the cry of "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the

* Lord Cockburn, 'Life of Lord Jeffery,' p. 312.

† Mr. Greville gives an animated but one-sided account of this strange scene, from particulars supplied by eye-witnesses:—"Wharncliffe was to have moved an address to the Crown against dissolving Parliament, and this motion the Ministers were resolved should not come on, but he contrived to bring it on so far as to get it put upon the journals. The Duke of Richmond endeavoured to prevent any speaking by raising points of order."

Bill." The result could not be doubted. The new House of Commons was a House pledged to the lips to pass the Reform Bill. The anti-Reformers could muster only a skeleton army, or rather "a ragged regiment," with which such men as Peel must have felt it a degradation to march through Coventry. The Bill was re-introduced on the 24th of June; but the second reading was postponed until the 4th of July, that the Scotch and Irish Reform Bills might be brought in. The debate then lasted three nights, and was brightened by a brilliant oration from Macaulay, which in Jeffrey's opinion, put him clearly at the head of the great speakers, if not the debaters, of the House. Sir Robert Peel was one of the last who spoke, and he did so with significent caution, the caution of a statesman who meant to yield before it was too late. While still opposing the Bill before the House, he admitted that some reform was now not only expedient but necessary; that the state of the representation neither commanded the goodwill, nor secured the confidence of the nation; and he expressed himself willing to accept any plan of moderate reform which should be brought before the legislature. On a division the second reading was carried by 367 against 231, giving to Ministers a majority of 136.

Nothing disheartened, the Opposition, with zeal worthy of a better cause, proceeded to attack the Bill in Committee, drawing upon the forms of the House so as to delay its progress, and endeavouring to weary the majority by endless motions for adjournment. Such tactics may answer where the minority are sup-

ported by popular feeling, or the issue at stake is one to which the country is indifferent. But the English people were now in no mood to endure such prolonged trifling with a great measure which they had accepted with all their heart; and dangerous symptoms of discontent arose on every side. At last the Bill passed through Committee. The final debate occupied the evenings of the 19th, 20th, and 21st of September, and at its close, after an able but not very logical speech by Sir Robert Peel, the Bill passed by a majority of 109 (345 to 236).* On this occasion the House was surrounded by eager and excited crowds, who caught up the cheers of the triumphant majority, and spread the victorious sounds from street to street.

The Bill was carried up to the House of Peers on the 22nd of September, by Lord John Russell, attended by upwards of one hundred Commoners, who, when the Bill was placed in the Lord Chancellor's hands, gave vent to their feelings by loud cries of "Hear! Hear!" and were reproved for their breach of the conventionalities by counter-cries of "Order, order!" The second reading was moved by Earl Grey, on the 3rd of October,

* "Peel closed the debate on Thursday night with a very fine speech, the best (one of his opponents told me, and it is no use asking the opinions of friends if a candid opponent is to be found) he had ever made, not only on that subject, but on any other; he cut Macaulay to ribands. Macaulay is very brilliant, but his speeches are harangues and never replies; whereas Peel's long experience and real talent for debate give him a great advantage in the power of reply, which he very eminently possesses."—'The Greville Memoirs,' ii. 199, 200.

in a speech of great power and stately eloquence;* and was met by Lord Wharncliffe's curt amendment, "That the Bill be rejected," which he afterwards modified to, "That the Bill be read a second time this day six months." He was supported by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Lyndhurst, while the Government put forward Lord Melbourne and Lord Brougham. The Chancellor's speech was by many considered his masterpiece. "It was certainly a wonderful performance to witness. He shewed a most stupendous memory and extraordinary dexterity in handling the weapons both of ridicule and reason. Without a note to refer to, he went through all the speeches of his opponents delivered during the five nights' debate, analysing them successively, and, with a little aid from perversion, giving them all a seemingly triumphant answer." His peroration was as follows:—

"Among the awful considerations that now bow down my mind, there is one which stands pre-eminent above the rest. You are the highest judicature in the realm; you sit here as judges, and decide all causes, civil and criminal, without appeal. It is a judge's first

* "It was a solemn moment—one of the most solemn that has ever occurred in the History of the British senate. The eyes of the whole nation—we may almost say of the whole world—were fixed on the Lords, and they felt it. And the Premier was now standing before them to propose to an assembly—the majority of which he knew regarded him with a hostile aspect—a measure which he had taken up in his youth, for which he had carried on what seemed a hopeless and almost Quixotic struggle, through all the best years of his long public life, and which he was now in his old age enabled to bring forward as the first Minister of the Crown." —Molesworth, 'History of England,' i. 203.

duty never to pronounce sentence, in the most trifling case, without hearing. Will you make this the exception? Are you really prepared to determine, but not to hear, the mighty cause upon which a nation's hopes and fears hang? You are! Then beware of your decision! Rouse not, I beseech you, a peace-loving, but a resolute people; do not alienate from your body the affections of a whole empire. As your friend, as the friend of my order, as the friend of my country, as the faithful servant of my sovereign, I counsel you to assist with your uttermost efforts in preserving the peace, and upholding and perpetuating the constitution. Therefore I pray and I exhort you not to reject this measure. By all you hold most dear—by all the ties that bind every one of us to our common order and our common country, I solemnly adjure you—I warn you —I implore you—yea, on my bended knees, I supplicate you—reject not this Bill!" *

The Lords, however, were unmoved by this fervid appeal, and adopted Lord Wharncliffe's amendment by 199 against 158 (October 8th); a result which most of the London newspapers announced in black, the usual sign of mourning. It placed the Ministers in a difficult position. They knew that, if they resigned, an anti-Reform Government was absolutely impossible; that the attempt to establish one, would bring the country to

* "He continued for some time as if in prayer; but his friends, alarmed for him lest he should be suffering from the effects of the mulled port, imbibed by him very copiously towards the conclusion of the four hours, during which he was on his legs or his knees, picked him up, and placed him safely on the woolsack."—LORD CAMPBELL, ix. 398.

the verge of revolution. On the other hand, they could not hold office without fulfilling their pledges to the nation. Any such compromise as would satisfy the Tory Opposition was also out of consideration, as the public would unquestionably reject it. In truth, a stirring word, as Mr. Molesworth says, or a hasty phrase, flung among the multitude at that moment, would have involved England in civil war. The leaders of the movement, however, were not revolutionists, but Reformers; not men with selfish ends to serve, but men conscious of their high responsibility to the country; and while desirous that the popular enthusiasm, so far as it was necessary to the success of the bill, should be sustained, they were also desirous that it should be kept within bounds, knowing the evil that would flow from its excess. But it was not possible to prevent some manifestations of popular indignation. In London, and in many other great towns, the shops were closed, and the church-bells rang muffled peals. A run for gold began, which greatly alarmed the authorities at the Bank. The Spitalfields tradesmen determined to keep a political fast-day, and to shut every place of business on the following Wednesday. About 200 members of the House of Commons met at Willis's Rooms, and unanimously agreed that resolutions should be submitted to the House, affirming the expediency of declaring their unaltered and undiminished attachment to the principles of Reform, and their resolute purpose to support the King's Ministers. All the demonstrations were not so peaceful as this. At Derby a riot of so serious a character took place that the military had

to be called out. At Nottingham the castle, which was the property of the unpopular Duke of Newcastle, was burnt to the ground; and at Loughborough the disturbances were alarming and protracted. A revolution would probably have ensued had not the Ministers, at the King's request, made known their determination not to resign. On the 20th of October, Parliament was prorogued, the King in his speech intimating that Reform would again be brought forward in the coming session. A few days later, the city of Bristol was the scene of an alarming outbreak on the occasion of the public entry of the Recorder, Sir Charles Wetherell, who had made himself notorious by the violence of his opposition to the Reform Bill. Through the incompetence of the magistrates, a mob of five or six hundred rioters, most of them under twenty years of age, got possession of the city, and set fire to the Bridewell, the Jail, the Bishop's Palace, the Custom House, and Queen's Square. After the mischief was done, the military appeared, and riding into the midst of the rioters, sabred all they could get at; after which they re-captured the gaol, and the municipal authorities taking courage, order was gradually restored. The outbreak, as was afterwards made clear, had little to do with Reform, and was not the work of Reformers. It had an unfavourable effect, however, upon the fortunes of the cause; and from this time the King no longer went heartily with his Ministers, but harassed them greatly by his indecision. Yet they needed all the support he could give them: for it was their hard duty to stand in the breach between the violent of both parties; to urge forward

Reform with calmness, patience, and resolution, and yet to repress the vehemence of many of its advocates. Men were talking lightly of a large creation of peers, in order to overbear the resistance of the hostile majority of the House of Lords; forgetful that to thoughtful statesmen, the reform of one branch of the legislature at the expense of the other, must always seem a hazardous proceeding, and one to be adopted only in the last resort.

Parliament re-assembled on the 6th of December; and on the 12th, a revised Reform Bill was submitted to the House of Commons by Lord John Russell. It preserved the old number of members (658), with some modification of the allotment to Ireland and Scotland; retained the ten pound franchise for towns; respected the rights of the existing free burgesses all over the kingdom; extinguished fifty-six close boroughs, and deprived thirty minor boroughs of one member each. No division took place on the first reading. The second reading was opposed by Sir Robert Peel, who argued strongly against the measure, and predicted that, if successful, it would subvert the established order. He concluded thus:—

"I will continue my opposition to the last, believing, as I do, that this is the first step not directly to revolution, but to a series of changes which will affect the property and totally transmute the character of the mixed constitution of this realm. I will oppose it to the last, convinced that, although my opposition will be unavailing, it will not be fruitless, because the opposition now made will become a bar to further concessions

hereafter. If the whole House were now to join in giving way, it will have less power to resist future changes. On this ground I take my stand; not opposed to any well-considered reform of any of our institutions that need reform, but opposed to this reform in our constitution, because it tends to root up the feelings of respect—the feelings of habitual reverence and attachment, which are the only sure foundations of a Government. I will oppose to the last the undue encroachments of that democratic spirit to which we are advised to yield without resistance. We may make it supreme. We may establish a republic—full of energy—splendid in talent; but, in my conscience, I believe fatal to our real liberty, our security, and our peace!"

The second reading was carried by 326 votes against 162; a fact which should have taught the House of Lords the impolicy of further resistance. The Christmas recess followed. On the 17th of January, 1832, Parliament met again, and on the 20th the Commons went into Committee on the Bill. The old dilatory tactics were again adopted, but, as they could not be prolonged for ever, the Bill came on for the third reading on the 19th of March. Recommended by a majority of 116, in a House of 594 members, it went up to the Lords on the 26th of March; was read a first time *pro formâ;* and entered upon the ordeal of the second reading on the 9th of April. The debate extended over the nights from the 9th to the 13th, and the division was taken at dawn on the 14th. "The lights had grown yellower and dimmer in the fresh daylight, the faces of the wearied legislators had appeared more and

more haggard and heated; and at last, the slanting rays of the morning sun shone full in upon the woolsack, as the keen eyes of the Chancellor shot their glances, as wakeful as ever, from under the great wig. The attendance of strangers was as full as it had been twelve hours before; for it was not a scene which men would miss for the sake of food and sleep." The division gave Ministers a majority of nine (184 to 175); several of the Bishops having voted for the Bill, and many former opponents having learned the necessity of concession.*

* Lord Jeffrey furnishes an account of this debate:—"As," he says, "I did not get to bed till near eight this morning (and was out again at eleven) after fourteen hours' starving in the Lords, you cannot expect a long or a lively letter from me. You will see we had a majority of nine, being one more than anybody can account for. The debate was not very brilliant, but got, in its latter stage, excessively interesting. The Chancellor more tranquil, and less offensive, than usual, but not at all languid, and in very good voice throughout, chiefly correcting false representations, dispelling vain terrors, and assuaging and soothing. Lyndhurst's by far the cleverest and most dangerous speech against us in the debate, and very well spoken. Lord Grey's reply on the whole admirable; in tone and spirit perfect, and, considering his age and the time, really astonishing. He spoke near one hour and a half, after five o'clock, from the kindling dawn into full sun-light, and I think with great effect. The aspect of the House was very striking through the whole night, very full, and, on the whole, still and solemn. The whole throne and the space around it clustered over with 100 members of our House, and the space below the bar nearly filled with 200 more, ranged in a standing row of three deep along the bar, another sitting on the ground against the wall, and the space between covered with moving and sitting figures in all directions, with twenty or thirty clambering on the railings and perched up by the doorways. Between four and five, when the daylight began to shed its blue beams across the red candle-light, the scene was very picturesque, from the singular grouping of forty or fifty of us sprawling on the floor, awake and asleep, in all imaginable attitudes, and with all sorts of expres-

Much "pressure from without" was applied to the Peers during the Easter Recess. Petitions were sent up by every large town in the country; monster meetings were held; the Political Unions renewed their agitation. At a gathering at Taunton one of the speakers was Sydney Smith; and it was on this occasion that he made use of an illustration which has since become familiar as a household word. That the Lords could long prevent a Reform of Parliament he declared to be the most absurd notion that ever entered into human imagination. Their resistance reminded him, he said, of the great storm of Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs. Partington on that occasion. "In the winter of 1824, there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height—the waves rushed in upon the houses, and everything was threatened with destruction. In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, squeezing out the sea water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused. Mrs. Partington's spirit was up; but I need not tell you that the conflict was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs. Partington. She was excellent at a slop or a puddle, but she should not have meddled

sions and wrappings . . . The candles had been renewed before dawn, and blazed on after the sun came fairly in at the high windows, and produced a strange but rather grand effect, on the red draperies and furniture and dusky tapestry on the walls."—LORD COCKBURN'S 'Life of Lord Jeffrey,' pp. 323, 324, (ed. 1872).

with a tempest. Gentlemen—be at your ease—be quiet and steady. You will beat Mrs. Partington." *

That quietness and confidence which came from a feeling of strength were very necessary to the English people then, and were finely conspicuous at the grand meeting on the green slopes of Newhall Hill, at Birmingham, when the Political Unions assembled their thousands upon thousands, and exacted from them a solemn vow that they would devote themselves and their children to their country's cause. Then the multitude of voices joined in the 'Union Hymn,' which, at that time, was the true National Anthem:—

"God is our guide! no swords we draw,
We kindle not war's battle-fires;
By union, justice, reason, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires.
We raise the watchword liberty!
We will, we will, we will be free!"

Yet while the spirit-stirring sounds still echoed in men's ears, the Lords thought fit, on going into Committee on the Bill, to carry by a majority of 35, against Ministers, Lord Lyndhurst's motion for postponing the disfranchising clauses until the enfranchising clauses had first been considered. On the surface the motion appeared innocent enough; but its object was to place the control of the Committee in the hands of the Anti-Reformers, for the purpose of moulding the Bill into a (to them) more acceptable shape. The Government determined to be no party to such a manœuvre; and fell

* Sydney Smith, *Works*, iii. 123.

back upon their last expedient, of recommending to the King a creation of peers in numbers sufficient to enable them to carry their Bill through the Upper House, unmutilated. From the first the King had cherished an almost invincible objection to such a step; and he was, moreover, under the influence of an idea that if he once entered on the path of concession, it would lead him to the goal to which Lewis the 16th had been driven. The parallel so often dinned into the ears of the country by Tory orators, from Peel down to Sibthorpe,—a parallel between the initial stages of the great French Revolution and those of the Reform agitation,—had had its effect upon a mind never very strong, and a judgment never very clear. Rather than assent to a creation of peers, he accepted the resignation of Lord Grey and his colleagues (May 9th). He was probably unprepared for the storm that immediately broke forth. Throughout the kingdom, honest and peaceable citizens of the law-abiding class, bound themselves by a declaration that, until the Grey Cabinet was reinstated and the Bill passed, they would pay no taxes, nor would they purchase property distrained by the tax-gatherer. Lord Milton was the first to give practical effect to this declaration. The King had called upon the Duke to form an Administration, and the Duke had sought the co-operation of Sir Robert Peel; but that wary statesman did not fail to see that the country was in no mood for ministerial experiments, and he declined office. The Duke, faithful to the chief article of his political creed, that the King's Government must be carried on, persisted in his attempt to fulfil the royal commission; until a week's mortifying expe-

riences convinced him of its folly, and he learned, moreover, that he could not rely, as at first he had been disposed to rely, on the military power. There was no help for it but to retire; and for the King to recall Earl Grey on his own terms.* The Earl, accompanied by Lord Brougham, had an interview with his Majesty, whom they found in no gracious humour. This he showed by keeping them standing during the interview. He at once gave his consent, however, to the creation

* We find in Mr. Greville's pages a lively description of the scene in the House of Commons on Monday evening, the 14th of May, The Marquis of Tavistock told the diarist that he had never heard anything like its violence and excitement, and that to his dying day he should not forget it. The House was crammed to suffocation; shouts of applause hailed each violent sentiment and vituperative expression; and the greatest attention was given to the most impetuous speaker. "Tom Duncombe made one of his blustering Radical harangues, full of every sort of impertinence, which was received with immense applause, but which contrasted with an admirable speech, full of dignity, but also of sarcasm and severity, from John Russell—the best he ever made. The conduct of the Duke of Wellington in taking office to carry the bill, which was not denied, but which his friends feebly attempted to justify, was assailed with the most merciless severity, and (what made the greatest impression) was condemned (though in more measured terms) by moderate men and Tories, such as Inglis and Davies. Gilbert Baring, who spoke four times, at last proposed that there should be a compromise, and that the ex-Ministers should resume their seats and carry the Bill. This extraordinary proposition was drawn from him by the state of the House and the impossibility he at once saw of forming a new Government, and without any previous concert with the Duke, who, however, entirely approved of what he said. After the debate Baring and Sutton went to Apsley House, and related to the Duke what had taken place, the former saying he would face a thousand devils rather than such a House of Commons. From that moment the whole thing was at an end, and the next morning (Tuesday) the Duke repaired to the King, and told him that he could not form an Administration."—'The Greville Memoirs,' ii. 299, 300.

of as many peers as the Ministers might think necessary to strengthen their position in the House of Lords, with the provision that this power was not to be exercised until every means of avoiding the necessity for it had been tried; a provision readily accepted by Earl Grey, who had no desire to humble his order, if the difficulty could otherwise be settled. After some further conversation, the King asked:—"Is there anything more?" "Sire," replied Lord Brougham, "we have another request to make." "What!" replied the King; "have I not yet conceded enough?" "Yes," answered the Chancellor; "I do not wish to ask any fresh concessions of your Majesty, but simply to request you to put in writing the promise you have made us."

The King not unnaturally resented a demand which seemed to imply a want of confidence in his royal word, but he felt that he must give way. After a moment's hesitation he wrote on a small piece of paper the following authority:—

"The King grants permission to Earl Grey, and to his Chancellor Lord Brougham, to create such a number of peers as will be sufficient to insure the passing of the Reform Bill—first calling peers' eldest sons.

"WILLIAM R.

"Windsor, May 17, 1832."

The same evening, Sir Herbert Taylor, the King's private secretary, who had been present at the interview,

addressed a circular note to the most active of the Opposition Lords :—

"My dear Lord,—I am honoured with his Majesty's commands to acquaint your lordship that all difficulties to the arrangements in progress will be obviated by a declaration in the House of Peers to-night, from a sufficient number of peers, that in consequence of the present state of affairs they have come to the resolution of dropping their opposition to the Reform Bill, so that it may pass without delay, and as nearly as possible in its present shape.

"I have the honour to be, yours sincerely,

"HERBERT TAYLOR."

This communication had the desired effect. The Duke of Wellington and a large number of other peers withdrew from the House; the Reform Bill went rapidly through committee; and on the 4th of June was read a third time and passed, by a majority of 106 to 22. On the 5th the final touches were given to it in the Commons; and on the 7th it received the royal assent, in very much the same shape, after such and so many vicissitudes, that it wore when Lord John Russell first submitted it to an astonished legislature.*

This celebrated measure swept away fifty-six nomination boroughs, returning 112 members, and semi-disfranchised thirty more. Acting on the principle first enunciated by the great Lord Chatham, its authors gave

* G. O. Trevelyan, 'Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay,' i. 260.

65 additional representatives to the counties, and conferred the right of sending members to the House of Parliament upon Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and thirty-nine large and flourishing towns previously unrepresented. On the other hand, it justified Lord Grey's description of it as an aristocratic measure, by diminishing the numbers of the franchises in Preston and other places, where, previously, the suffrage was nearly universal. As to its results, if they have not been all that its opponents dreaded, they have certainly exceeded all that its supporters hoped. By securing for some of the most important interests in the nation their proper influence in legislation, the Reform Act opened the way to social and commercial changes of the highest value. If it subordinated the House of Peers in the last resort to the House of Commons, it delivered the aristocracy from the odium of unjust privilege which had hitherto attached to their order. No other proof of its wisdom is needed than the fact that, since it was inscribed on the Statute Book, all classes have learned to draw nearer to each other, the feeling of loyalty towards the Throne has greatly deepened, the public credit has been strengthened, popular discontent has become a thing of the past, and the nation has rested in security and peace.*

* "Such was the Reform Act of 1832, by which the landed interests were brought down some little way from a supremacy which had once been natural and just, but which had now become insufferably tyrannical and corrupt. As the manufacturing and commercial classes had long been rising in numbers, property, and enlightenment, it was time for them to be

obtaining a proportionate influence in the government, By this Act they did not obtain their due influence; but they gained much; and the way was cleared for more. Great as was the gain thus far, there was yet a mightier benefit in the proof that the will of the people, when sufficiently intelligent and united, would avail to modify the government through the forces of reason and resolution, without violence, This point ascertained, and the benefit secured, all subsided into quiet. Trade and manufactures began immediately to prosper; credit was firm, and the majority of the nation were in high hope of what might be expected from a government which had begun its reforms so nobly, and promised many more. There were some, and not a very few, who declared that the sun of England had set for ever; but yet nobody could see that it was growing dark. Men in general thought that if they had ever walked in broad daylight, it was now."—Miss Martineau, 'History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,' ii. 70.

IV.

In the first Parliament returned under the provisions of the new Reform Act, the Tories were nowhere. They numbered fewer than one hundred and fifty in the House of Commons; and though their strength in the House of Lords remained unbroken, they could use it to no effective purpose; the utmost they could do was to harass and delay. Carried forward by the impulse of a tremendous majority, the Whig Ministry entered upon a course of enlightened legislation; and among the triumphs of the next two years must stand recorded the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, the destruction of the commercial monopoly in the East, the reform of the Irish Church Establishment, and the reorganisation of the Poor Law system.

One of the earliest subjects to which the attention of Earl Grey and his colleagues was called in 1833, was the condition of Ireland. The acts of violence and outrage which prevailed there from north to south were connected in great measure with the resistance offered by the Roman Catholic peasantry to the tithe-collectors of the Protestant Establishment. But the excitement was increased by Mr. O'Connell's persistent agitation for a repeal of the legislative union which bound Ireland to Great Britain in imperial bonds. The Government proposed to deal with the evil in two ways; to crush disorder

by strenuous coercion, and, at the same time, to conciliate by prudent reform. This reform involved a partial redistribution of Church property, with the view of redressing some of the greatest grievances of which the Irish people complained.

A Bill for the Suppression of Disturbances in Ireland was introduced by Lord Althorp on the 27th of February; and was supported by Sir Robert Peel in one of his most effective speeches. He advocated it on the plain broad ground of necessity; and to O'Connell and others who spoke of it as violating the forms and usages of the British Constitution, replied with undeniable force. "I admit," he said, "that it is a measure of severity—of intolerable severity—unless there be a paramount necessity for it. I admit that; but I deny that it is a suspension of the British Constitution. Oh, no! that has been long suspended. I see, indeed, a ghastly form, which takes the semblance and usurps the name of the British Constitution, but it is a phantom without life. You mistake the British Constitution. It is not a mere heap of cumbrous formalities that serve no other purpose but to give impunity to those who are accused of crime. The British Constitution is meant to give equal protection, and to ensure to all equal liberty. It pre-supposes the existence of some executive prepared to work it; of instruments imbued with the generous spirit in which itself was framed. It pre-supposes a love of order—a respect for property—a reverence for the obligation of an oath. The British Constitution never recognised the vile doctrine of passive resistance. It may have no

punishment for it. It may have been too generous to foresee a wide-spread combination among rich and poor to defeat the law, and rob others of their property; but as long as this robbery is done with impunity—as long as innocent men are fleeing away from their homes to seek protection from murder, do what you will, but do not talk of 'the British Constitution!' Spare us stale quotations from Chatham; spare us the empty boast, that 'an Englishman's house is his castle!' . . . Will you see men savagely murdered in the broad daylight by assassins, and then mock their widows, and mock their children, with your laboured periods about 'the British Constitution' and 'an Englishman's castle?' You may not be able to punish the guilt—you may not be able to prevent murder—but do not let such deeds be perpetrated under the name and cover of 'the British Constitution!'"

The Bill passed the Commons by a majority of 345 to 86, and, after receiving some amendments, the House of Lords, almost unopposed. Sir Robert Peel also supported the other great measure of the session, the emancipation of the slaves in our West Indian Colonies at a cost of £20,000,000; though disapproving of certain of the provisions which accompanied it, and urging the necessity of caution in pushing forward an enactment of so much importance. The Emancipation Act passed the Lords on the 30th of August.

The session of 1834 was one of great excitement. It found the Ministry weaker and the Opposition stronger; and Peel daily rising in the estimation both of the House and the country as a practical statesman,

endowed with rare powers of organisation, and with that mastery of details which the British public so highly appreciate. Perceiving how wide an unpopularity attached to the name of Tory, Sir Robert substituted for it that of Conservative; and on all occasions appeared as the prudent advocate of safe measures of progression, while resolutely opposing the advance of democratic principles. He openly declared his acceptance of recent changes as irrevocable and final; as constituting a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of the country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or insidious means. The position which he thus assumed, the new departure which he thus provided for his party, was ingeniously adapted to the temper of the public and the spirit of the times. Assured of the support of the old Tories, he gained new recruits through that unreasoning apprehension of democracy which Radical activity encouraged; while, by acknowledging the need of a steady progression and development, he secured those earnest and ardent minds which recoiled from the obstinate fixity and rigid narrowness of the old Tory school.*

The Ministers were greatly embarrassed by the discussions that had sprung up among their own supporters. In a body that is constantly moving forward, it will always be the case that the advanced ranks, in the flush of their eagerness and alacrity, will feel a generous indignation at the cautious and timid spirits slowly bringing up the rear. The Liberal party held together so long as they

* Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History of England,' ii. 65.

had a battle to fight; but when the victory was won, and the excitement of triumph had subsided, they remembered that they were not all agreed upon the direction of their future march. They remembered that each division clung to its own banner and raised its own rallying cry. Thus, there were the New Whigs, or Liberals, who had been returned chiefly by the great towns, and who, being without political experience though not wanting in political enthusiasm, desired to make short work of everything which seemed to them anomalous or effete. They wanted every grievance redressed, every abuse rooted up; and took no heed of the difficulties which a practical legislator is bound to consider. It is only in Utopia that reforms can be effected without any regard to vested interests. Those sanguine politicians, however, were less ambitious, and, consequently, more amenable to discipline, than the Radicals; a group of some forty or fifty members, who seldom agreed with one another, or with anybody else,—except in opposing the Government,—who entertained the wildest theories of democracy, though having only the vaguest idea of what might be their consequences. Then there were the old aristocratic Whigs, represented by the Premier himself, who had done yeoman's service in their day, but did not recognize the fact that their day was over; that in carrying the Reform Bill, they had done their work; and that the monument they had laboriously crowned was their own sepulchre. "They had perfected the Constitution," says Sir Erskine May, "according to their own conceptions: they looked back with trembling upon the

perils through which it had recently passed; and dreaded the rough spirit of their restless allies, who,—without veneration for the past, or misgivings as to the future,—were already clamouring for further changes in Church and State." The Ministry, however, was not wholly composed of these satisfied veterans. The younger members believed in the vitality of the Constitution, in its power of development and growth, in its capacity of adaptation to the constantly changing conditions of an active and generous people. They were prepared to place themselves at the head of the onward movement, with the view and in the hope of directing it aright, of moderating its speed, and of conducting it safely to the desired goal, in harmony with the wishes and opinions of the country.

The Ministry was seriously divided on the Irish Church question: one section being in favour of a reduction of the Establishment, and the appropriation of its surplus revenues to general State purposes; the other stigmatizing such appropriation as a sacrilegious confiscation. It was hoped to prevent an open rupture by removing Lord Stanley, the head of the latter section, from the Irish Secretaryship to the Colonial Office, in which he would no longer come in contact with the Irish members and their chronic grievance. But, as ill-fortune would have it, Mr. Ward, M.P. for St. Albans, on the 22nd of May brought in a motion for the reduction of the Irish Church; and as the Ministry would not undertake to meet it with a direct negative, Lord (then Mr.) Stanley, Sir James Graham, Lord Ripon, and the Duke of Richmond resigned. Their places were filled by

Mr. Spring Rice, Lord Auckland, Lord Carlisle, and the Marquis of Conyngham; and the reconstructed Cabinet, conciliating the great body of their supporters by the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, were able to shelve Mr. Ward's motion by moving the previous question, which was carried by a large majority. Reconstructions, however, seldom add to the strength or stability of a Government; and the Grey Ministry was not yet in smooth waters. The time had come for renewing the Coercion Act. All the Ministers agreed that its renewal was a necessity; but while Earl Grey wished it continued with its original severity, Lord Althorp was anxious that the clauses against public meetings should be dropped. Mr. Littleton, the Irish Secretary, an amiable but inefficient Minister, revealed Lord Althorp's opinion under the seal of secrecy, to Mr. O'Connell, who, however, took care that it should soon be publicly known. In this unpleasant conjuncture, as Earl Grey persisted in pushing forward the Coercion Bill, no course seemed open to Lord Althorp but to resign (July 7th, 1834); whereupon the Premier, broken with years, and conscious of his inability to carry the Coercion Bill in the face of Lord Althorp's opposition, also resigned. It was time; for his Ministry was sorely humiliated. Its later legislation, though well-intentioned, had been feeble in conception and execution. In administrative business it had egregiously failed; and its different elements had never been fused into a compact and homogeneous mass, for want of sufficient fusing power in its chief. As for Earl Grey himself, his consistency could not be questioned; his honour was

unimpeachable; his courage had been proved by his steady pilotage of the vessel of the State through the storms of the Reform agitation; and he was not without considerable abilities. But he was sorely deficient in sympathy, in foresight, in grasp of consequences; in a word, he was not a statesman. It would have been well for his fame had he retired from office as soon as the Reform Act was enrolled among the statutes of the land.

Earl Grey's resignation was received by the country with indifference; and probably the formation of a Conservative government would have excited no surprise. According to Lord Campbell, this was prevented only by Lord Brougham's vigour, promptitude, and resolution. He persuaded the other members of the Cabinet that there was no occasion for them to retire; that if Althorp would return, they could dispense with Grey; that Althorp in his zeal for the public welfare would return if the Cabinet conceded to him an amendment of the Coercion Bill; that they were not justified in sending in their resignations; and that the King, whatever his secret wish, could not dismiss them and bring in the borough-mongers, while they had still so large a majority in the Commons. His arguments prevailed. The Ministers agreed to hold by their offices; and a Premier was found in Lord Melbourne, a statesman who, throughout his life, seemed to do his best to hide from the country the full measure of his capacity. Lord Althorp, who hated office, and was fond of saying that men would insist on making him a statesman when Nature intended him to be a grazier, was induced, very

reluctantly, to resume the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and the lead of the House of Commons.*

The remainder of the session was chiefly occupied with the Irish Coercion Bill and the Irish Tithe Bill. The latter considerably damaged the Government, as they allowed Mr. O'Connell to introduce into it an important alteration. The alteration was an improvement, but it subjected the Ministry to a charge of subserviency to the great Irish agitator. However, the session was nearly over; the path of the Government seemed clear before them; and the recess was close at hand, in which they would have time to look around them, and discuss at leisure their plans for next year's campaign. It came, and proved to be big with events. First, there was a violent public quarrel between Lord Durham and Lord Brougham; which was followed closely by the death of

* An acute observer says of this nobleman:—"His popularity in the House of Commons is very great, and even surprising; it is a proof of the influence which personal character may obtain when unadorned with great abilities and shining parts; his remarkable *bonhomie*, unalterable good nature and good temper, the conviction of his honesty and sincerity, and of his want of ambition, his single-mindedness, his unfeigned desire to get out of the trammels and cares of office, have all combined to procure for him greater personal regard, and to a certain degree greater influence, than any Minister ever possessed in my recollection. There is no such feeling as animosity against Althorp. Some detest his principles, some despise his talents, but none detest or despise the man; and he is said by those who are judges of such matters to have one talent, and that is a thorough knowledge of the House of Commons, and great quickness and tact in discovering the bias and disposition of the House."—'The Greville Memoirs,' iii. 105, 106. Lord Jeffrey, in a letter to Lord Cockburn, expresses his warm feeling towards Althorp:—"There is something to me quite delightful in his calm, clumsy, courageous, immutable probity and well-meaning, and it seems to have a charm for everybody."—LORD COCKBURN, 'Life of Lord Jeffrey, p. 317.

Earl Spencer, the father of Lord Althorp, necessitating the removal of the latter to the Upper House. This, of course, involved his resignation of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; which Lord Melbourne immediately proposed to give to Lord John Russell. But to the utter surprise of everybody, to the consternation of the Ministry, the dismay of the Whigs, the confusion of the country, and the exultation of the Tories, the King availed himself of the opportunity to dismiss Lord Melbourne and his colleagues, and call in the Duke of Wellington (November 14th). He had long been weary of them; had chafed at their measures of reform; and had wholly separated himself from them on the Irish Church question. Observing their loss of popularity, he had erroneously concluded that the country had undergone a Conservative reaction, and would welcome with joy a change in his councils.

The Duke of Wellington, on receiving the Royal summons, advised that the task of constructing an Administration should be entrusted to Sir Robert Peel, who had gone to Rome to spend the winter there; and in the interval, before he could return, undertook to act as First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State.* Lord Lyndhurst received the great seal on the 21st of November. By dint of travelling night and day, Sir Robert Peel reached London on Tuesday, December 9th.

* "The Irish hold it impossible," wrote Fonblanque, "for a man to be in two places at once, 'like a bird.' The Duke has proved this no joke—he is in five places at once. At last, then, we have an united government. The Cabinet Council sits in the Duke's head; and the Ministers are all of one mind."—'England under Seven Administrations,' iii. 140.

He was of opinion that the country was not yet ripe for a Conservative Government; that his own party were not ripe for power; but the King had commanded, and he must obey. He could not decline the charge entrusted to him; but in his own heart he regretted that he was forced to accept it. That the Whigs were unpopular was true; but their unpopularity had not yet brought the Conservatives into favour, nor had the impetus of the Reform movement as yet expended itself. He could see nothing before him but certain failure and possible discredit. The position was one which he would not have chosen, and did not enjoy; but with his usual courage he proceeded to make the best of it.

It was unfortunate for him that he could not form such a Cabinet as he would have wished, and as, indeed, the juncture required. The materials which he was to manipulate were forced upon him. Some of the men were old Tories, whose antecedents belied the profession of moderate reform which the new Toryism loved to make. Others were politicians, whose abilities were less doubtful than their consistency. He ardently desired to secure the services of Lord Stanley ("the Rupert of Debate") and Sir James Graham; and the eloquence and daring of the former, and the administrative capacity of the latter, would have greatly strengthened him; but though they had left the Whig camp, they were not yet prepared to join the Conservative. Finally the administration was thus composed:—Sir Robert Peel, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Chancellor; Lord Rosslynn, President of the Council; Lord Wharncliffe, Lord Privy

Seal; The Duke of Wellington, Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Mr. Goulburn, Home Secretary; Lord Aberdeen, Colonial Secretary; Earl de Grey, First Lord of the Admiralty; Sir George Murray, Master of the Ordnance; Mr. Alexander Baring, President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint; Earl of Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control; Sir Edward Knatchbull, Paymaster of the Forces; Mr. J. C. Herries, Secretary at War; and Sir Henry Hardinge, Secretary for Ireland.

The Conservatives had soon reason to discover that the King's precipitate and unconstitutional action in dismissing the Melbourne Government was a fatal mistake. Whigs and Radicals quickly forgot their differences in the presence of a common enemy and under the sense of a common danger. The fear lest the advantages already gained should be lost, animated the Whigs; and an apprehension that the progress of reform would be absolutely arrested, inspired the Radicals. And when it became known that Lord Melbourne had refused the earldom and the Garter with which the King endeavoured to compensate him for an unmerited humiliation, the two sections cordially shook hands, and the Liberal party once more presented an united front. To go on with a House of Commons in which a majority of two-thirds was opposed to him, Sir Robert felt to be impossible, and he determined to appeal to the country, though with little hope of a favourable response. He put forward a manifesto to the nation in the shape of an address to the electors of Tamworth, which was skilfully constructed with a view to obtain for his Government a

fair trial. He announced that he was prepared to act in the true spirit of Reform, and to undertake a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, in a friendly temper; combining with the firm maintenance of established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances. He promised a fair consideration to the questions of municipal reform and Church rates, and to all measures affecting the relations of the Church and Dissent.* "Our object will be," he added, "the maintenance of peace, the scrupulous and honourable fulfilment, without reference to their original policy, of all engagements with foreign powers, the support of public credit, the enforcement of strict economy, and the just and impartial consideration of what is due to all interests—agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial." . . . . "I enter upon the arduous duties assigned to me with the deepest sense of the responsibility they involve, with great distrust of my own qualifications for their adequate discharge, but at the same time with a resolution to persevere, which nothing could inspire but the strong impulse of public duty, the consciousness of upright motives, and the firm belief that the people of this country will so far maintain the prerogative of the King as to give to the Ministers of his choice not an implicit confidence, but a fair trial."†

It is impossible to read this "manifesto" without being struck by the difference it reveals between the Peel of 1835 and the Peel of 1825. In the interval the

* Annual Register, year 1834, p. 339.

† Guizot, 'Life of Peel,' p. 72.

politician had developed into the statesman; had emancipated himself from the trammels of party tradition and party prejudice, and learned to look at every question in its relation to the interests of the empire. The old Tories were quick to perceive the change, and their souls were filled with trouble. Men like Lord Eldon asked one another what was the use of turning out the Whigs, if the Conservative leaders were as willing as they were to meddle with the institutions of the country. "They might not at present," said the ex-Chancellor,* "be going to the full length to which the others were going; but they would at least make so many important changes in Church and State that nobody could guess how far the precedents they established might lead to changes of a very formidable kind hereafter." On the other hand, the Liberals were not convinced of Sir Robert's sincerity. They protested that though the voice was the voice of Jacob the hands were those of Esau. They looked from the Premier to his colleagues, and shrugged their shoulders suspiciously. They remembered Sir Robert's prolonged opposition to the Reform Bill; and felt that he could hardly be trusted to carry out the policy which it had inaugurated. Such was the view taken by the majority of the electors; although the result of Sir Robert's appeal was, on the whole, sufficiently favourable to justify him in having made it. Before the dissolution, his followers in the House of Commons did not exceed 150 in number; in the new Parliament, they mustered 250; while he was

* Twiss, 'Life of Lord Eldon, iii. 244.

able to count upon a good deal of support from waverers, moderate Whigs, and independent members who thought him entitled to "the fair trial" for which he had asked. And though the city of London, which had previously returned three Liberals, now sent four,—though all the metropolitan boroughs elected Radicals,—the great towns of Bristol, Exeter, Halifax, Hull, Leeds, Newcastle, York, and Warrington, which had formerly been represented by Liberals, now chose Conservatives. In the counties, too, the Conservatives gained so largely as to show that the great territorial proprietors had recovered their influence. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Denbighshire, Derbyshire, Devonshire, South Essex, West Gloucestershire, South Hampshire, South Lancashire, South Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, East Norfolk, South Northamptonshire, North Shropshire, East Suffolk, West Suffolk, East Surrey, West Surrey, South Warwickshire; all went over to the Conservatives.* In England the ministerial party had gained a majority, the Liberal majority came from Ireland and Scotland.†

* "Nobody," writes Greville, "can possibly deny that there is a great reaction in the country; and though the weight of the towns, and the power of the ten-pounders thrown into the other scale, make it preponderate, there is a strong counteracting force which will enable the better cause to maintain a respectable fight."—'The Greville Memoirs,' iii. 199.

† Lord Campbell thinks that if, without dissolving Parliament, Peel had brought forward his measures; if, keeping an appeal to the country as a resource in case of factious opposition to them, he had copied Pitt's policy in 1784; that, like Pitt, he might have ruled for twenty years. But by immediate dissolution he recklessly threw away the trump card by which the game might perhaps have been won.—'Life of the Lord Chancellors,' ix. 463. Peel, however, in dissolving Parliament, acted entirely in harmony

Parliament met on the 19th of February, 1835. The first struggle between the two parties took place on the election of a Speaker; the Liberals being dissatisfied with the conduct of Manners Sutton, who, in the previous session, had yielded to the temptation of active partisanship. They therefore put forward Mr. Abercromby, one of the members for Edinburgh; and after an animated debate, carried his appointment by 316 votes to 306. An analysis of the division showed that the quarrel between O'Connell and the ex-ministers had been composed, and that the latter could count upon his future support. Sir Robert, however, did not succumb to a single defeat; and a rumour got abroad that he contemplated another appeal to the country. Lord John Russell, as leader of the Opposition, made an attempt to draw from the Minister a declaration of his intentions. Sir Robert's reply was carefully worded:—"The noble lord has asked me whether or not I have countenanced rumours which he says are prevalent, respecting a dissolution of Parliament. I tell him in reply, that by no act or expression of mine, directly or indirectly, have I sanctioned or countenanced such rumours. I will tell him, with equal fairness, that I have never discussed with anybody the case hypotheti-

with constitutional principles. Mr. Doubleday remarks that "true policy would have suffered the majority to put themselves in the wrong before dissolving them, as the advantage so gained would have overbalanced any possible disadvantages which might have arisen out of a longer delay."—'Life of Sir Robert Peel,' ii. 195. He forgets that the country resented the King's precipitate and unjustifiable dismissal of the Melbourne ministry.

cally in which a dissolution might be considered necessary. I must, at the same time, say that it would be unbecoming in me, as a minister of the Crown, to consent to place any prerogative of the Crown in abeyance, or to pledge myself how I should advise the Crown as to the course it should pursue." While thus avoiding to disclose his real intentions, he contrived to hold over the Opposition the menace of another dissolution, and to neutralize many hostile votes. Meanwhile, he was actively engaged in the preparation of measures which he hoped would conciliate the good will of the country. He appointed an Ecclesiastical Commission,* consisting of the two Archbishops, the Bishops of London, Lincoln, and Gloucester, and some of the principal members of the Government. He also brought forward a Tithe Bill and a Dissenters' Marriage Bill. His activity did not save him from several defeats; but of these he took no notice, further than to announce his resolution to retain office until a vote of direct want of confidence should be passed by the House of Commons. He challenged Lord John Russell, as leader of the Opposition, to bring forward such a vote; but Lord John preferred to give battle on ground of his own choosing. And it was at length resolved to encounter the Government on the question of the appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to secular purposes. On the 30th of March Lord John Russell moved a resolution to the following effect:—"That this House resolve

* This Commission drew forth Sydney Smith's celebrated 'Letters to Archdeacon Singleton.'

itself into a committee of the whole House, in order to consider the present state of the Church Establishment in Ireland, with the view of applying any surplus of the revenues not required for the spiritual care of its members to the general education of all classes of the people, without distinction of religious persuasion." It was obvious that Sir Robert could not accept this resolution, and he met it with arguments of the highest ingenuity. He described it as a proposal to affirm an abstract right to deal with an imaginary surplus, at some undefined period which might never arrive. He asked whether anything was to be gained by the affirmation of so vague a proposition, respecting something the existence of which had not even been proved. It might serve as another firebrand to kindle the inflammatory mass of Irish religious sentiment; but could not lead to any practical good. He concluded by denying the right of the legislature to alienate ecclesiastical property for secular purposes, though he admitted the right of redistribution.

"The best proof that the resolution points at no determinate or practical course is its own vagueness, and the consequent diversity of principles among those whom it has been framed to enfold; some professing at least that they must still maintain the church; others that the church is an atrocity; others that it is a nuisance because all establishments are bad; others that the Catholic clergy should be maintained by the State as well as the Protestant. Yet you call this a final settlement of the question. This resolution may have the advantage of enabling you to act together

to-night, but you act on different principles and with different views. You are all aware that this is no final settlement; that it is only an instalment of that whole amount which is held in contemplation; that it is only an indication of the course you intend to pursue. Because you yourselves have taken up a position that is untenable, you wish me to take it in common with you. But I will not consent to appropriate this property, which is ecclesiastical and connected with the Protestant establishment, to other purposes than those of the Establishment. I will not assent to your resolution for the sake of Ireland, because I know it will excite in that unhappy and susceptible country false hopes—hopes which you cannot realize, and yet hopes that you will shrink from disappointing. I tell you beforehand I will not act on your resolution. I shall oppose the motion for going into Committee; in Committee I shall oppose the resolution; and, lastly, I shall oppose with all my strength the communication of that resolution to his Majesty. I will do so because it wears all the appearance of a purpose to pass by the House of Lords. Why have not the movers of this resolution brought in a bill? Are they uncertain of their plan? Are they ashamed of presenting in ordinary course the result of their calm, solemn, and mature deliberation? Do you consider it right to ask for a resolution of this nature under the unfair and dishonest pretence of making a communication to the Crown, which might have been done in a modest manner without any parade or the excitement of the least commotion? If you think it right that a bill should be brought in on the

subject, I will afford every facility. You may succeed in forcing your resolution on us. It may enable you to embarrass the future progress of the Administration. But I tell you, notwithstanding your vaunted majorities here, you do not control public opinion. We may be weak here, but this I tell you, that there is a public opinion altogether independent of majorities, and which is not controlled by votes, but which must always hereafter be an essential element in every executive government. I never was more confident of anything than that the people will not sanction a motion to embarrass the Government. They would sanction you in attempting a vote of want of confidence; that would be a usual course of proceeding. Why have you not the manliness to propose it? Why do you not say at once that you want to turn out the Government by the introduction of this measure? Why, then, do you not displace us, and then carry on the measure triumphantly? I feel that I cannot undertake to enforce your resolution. I shall adhere to the principles of my own measure. I feel that such is the necessity for the settlement of the Tithe question, that it will admit of no further delay. I should press it forward; and if your determination to throw unusual impediments in the way of the Government be plainly indicated, if you determine to obstruct it in principle and detail, I shall then see that it is not possible for me, consistently with any sense of duty, to remain in the situation that at present I have the honour to hold." *

* Sir Robert's speech will be found *in extenso* in Hansard, xxvii. 728–760.

Ultimately, Lord John's resolution was carried, (on the 3rd of April), by 322 to 289,—a majority of 33. It was followed, on the 7th, by a resolution to the effect that no Irish Tithe Bill could be accepted which was not founded on the Appropriation principle. This was carried by a majority of 27. Next day Sir Robert resigned. But though the victory was apparently with the Opposition, we may doubt whether the real success was not with the defeated Minister, who was never more sure of ultimate triumph than in this moment of seeming discomfiture. During the five months of his Premiership he had risen as high in the public estimation as the Opposition had fallen low. He had shown himself the first of English statesmen by his practical ability, his administrative skill, his fertility of resource, and his personal disinterestedness. Mr. Doubleday justly comments upon two important political results which sprang from his brief-lived Administration. One was, that, by his nerve and readiness, he largely added to his repute as a first-rate debater and man of business. The second, that he acquired a profound confidence in his future strength from the altered position of his political rivals. This justifiable conviction could be traced in the addresses which he delivered at the civic festivals organised in his honour; while the emphatic advice to "Register! register! register!"* which he offered to his friends on one of those occasions, was a proof that he looked forward to the future possession of power, to a time when the government of the country would again be placed in his hands.

* This famous "cry" was enunciated at a dinner in Merchant Taylors' Hall, May, 1838.

On Sir Robert's resignation, the King had no alternative but to recall Lord Melbourne, who proceeded to surround himself with most of his former colleagues. The chief changes were the appointment of Mr. Poulett Thomson, a Radical, to the Board of Trade: and the "shelving" of Lord Brougham, whose waywardness and arrogance had discredited him with the country and rendered him obnoxious to Ministers. "Although he will be dangerous as an enemy," said Lord Melbourne, "he would be certain destruction as a friend. We may have small chance of going on without him, but to go on with him is impossible." To avert his hostility * for the present, however, the Great Seal was put in commission; an arrangement which he was allowed to suppose to be dictated by the King's prejudice.

Political prophets augured but a short career for the new Whig Ministry. It lasted, however, nearly six years. This was due to the peculiar condition of parties. The Liberals included three distinct sections, the Whigs, the Radicals, and Daniel O'Connell's "tail," whose principal bond of union was their antipathy to a common foe. The Conservatives seemed a more compact and homogeneous force; but they, too, were divided by marked shades of opinion into Sir Robert Peel's immediate following, the Irish Orangemen and the English Ultra-Tories.† The latter two sections did not follow

* "Brougham is to be set at defiance [this was not the case]; his fall in public estimation, his manifold sins against his colleagues, and his loss of character, all justify them, and enable them (as they think), to do so with impunity."—'The Greville Memoirs,' iii. 252.

† In 1837 the numerical strength of parties was estimated as follows:—Whigs, 152; Liberals, 100; Radicals, 80; total, 332. Tories, 139; Ultra-Tories, 100; Conservatives, 80; total, 319.

at first their leader with implicit confidence. They recalled his concession of Catholic Emancipation, and the liberal policy which he had developed during his five months' premiership; and they observed with distrust that he had frequently supported, never heartily opposed, the Whig measures for redressing the grievances of Dissenters. Such a state of affairs could not but paralyse Sir Robert Peel's efforts to replace his party in power; and that he eventually succeeded in conquering it, is a proof of his consummate generalship; his patience, energy, and equability of temper. Still, the situation of the Ministry was one of great embarrassment. Melbourne was less able than Peel to rely on the loyalty and discipline of his followers; and was continually placed between two fires, the Whigs combining with the Conservatives to oppose the organic changes advocated by the Liberals. The growth of Chartism in England, and the violence of the Repeal agitation in Ireland, deepened that dread of democracy which had been growing in the hearts of the respectable classes for half a century. In their earnest efforts, therefore, to reform the abuses that weakened our national institutions, Ministers were exposed to a succession of attacks and counter-attacks. When they sought to deal out a measure of justice to Nonconformists, or to extinguish the corruption that had vitiated the municipal system of the country, the Tories accused them of yielding to democracy. When they refused to join in assaults upon the Church and the House of Lords, or to favour organic changes of the Constitution, the Radicals denounced them as truckling to an effete Toryism. The part they were called upon

to play was a thankless and an ungracious one, which brought them no honour at the time, and could not secure them even the compensation of the grateful acknowledgement of posterity. Yet the thoughtful critic will admit that it was an eminently useful part. They interposed between the Radicals with their crude theories and the old Tories with their disastrous prejudices. They accomplished no heroic legislation, but they inscribed many admirable measures in the Statute-Book, contributing to the social welfare and religious freedom of the people. They refused to destroy, but they were careful to amend. This is just the work, however, which the public cannot appreciate. A great legislative reform, a reform on a colossal scale, they see and understand; but the minor improvements which facilitate the efficient action of the constitutional machinery, they cannot discern, and they do not value. So it naturally happened that the Radicals fell away from a Government which, in their eyes, did little or nothing; while the Conservatives grew more and more impatient of a Government which, in their eyes, was always doing something. And this unpopularity was increased by the administrative inefficiency which they undoubtedly exhibited, and their unfortunate inability to produce a good financier. When they fell in 1841, their fall was unaccompanied by a single expression of regret. No Ministry ever passed into the cold shade of Opposition amid such absolute indifference. To the observer it seemed most strange that they should have held their ground so long, when everybody was evidently so pleased at their retirement. Yet, after all, their failure was not so

much their own fault as the fault of the Peers, who set themselves from the first to neutralise their activity, and paralyse their legislative efforts. And in this unworthy task they easily succeeded, the Opposition being as overwhelmingly strong in eloquence and characters as in numbers. Ministers had against them, as Macaulay reminds us, Brougham, who from a dangerous friend had been converted into a mortal foe; the Duke, "with the highest character of any public man of the age"; Lyndhurst, Aberdeen, Ellenborough, and others, every one of whom was an overmatch for their best orator. And they had besides *les gros bataillons* in their front. Mr. Trevelyan observes, that an Upper Chamber which will accept from Ministers whom it detests no measure that has not behind it an irresistible mass of excited public opinion, has, sooner or later, the fate of those Ministers in its hands.* No doubt, the Liberals, under the leadership of a man of genius, who could have conceived and executed great measures, and have awakened by his eloquence the public sympathy in support of them, would have triumphed over every difficulty; but then, unfortunately, they could not at that time boast of such a leader. The Prime Minister was a man of considerable

* "For, on the one hand, the friction generated by the process of forcing a Bill through a reluctant House of Lords annoys and scandalises a nation which soon grows tired of having a revolution once a twelvemonth; and, on the other hand, the inability of a Cabinet to conduct through both Houses that continuous flow of legislation which the ever-changing necessities of a country like ours demand—alienates those among its more ardent supporters who take little account of its difficulties, and see only that it is unable to turn its Bills into Acts,"—G. O. TREVELYAN, 'Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay,' ii. 57.

ability; and his lieutenants commanded respect by their talents, high character, and long services; but not one of them could excite the popular enthusiasm or stimulate the energies even of their own party. In the Lower House their inferiority was as conspicuous as in the Upper. What but defeat could be the result when they encountered Stanley and Graham, Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, and Peel, the greatest Parliamentary captain of his time?

V.

The Whig Administration might justly claim credit for the measure which distinguished the session of 1835, the Municipal Corporation Act. It introduced into the local government of England a much needed reform, and settled it upon an uniform basis. A corporation had come to be regarded as "a close governing body, with peculiar privileges," existing not for the benefit of the governed, but for the advantage of the few individuals who had usurped authority. And while in small and insignificant boroughs this close form of municipal government prevailed, towns were growing in wealth and population, the inhabitants of which were wholly excluded from any share in the management of their own affairs. Two millions of people, says Sir Erskine May, were denied the constitutional privilege of self-government. "Self-elected and irresponsible corporations," he adds;* "were suffered to enjoy a long dominion. Composed of local, and often hereditary, cliques and family connections, they were absolute masters over their own townsmen. Generally of one political party, they excluded men of different opinions, —whether in politics or religion,—and used all the

* Sir T. Erskine May, 'Constitutional History of England,' ii. 497–499.

influence of their office for maintaining the ascendancy of their own party. Elected for life, it was not difficult to consolidate their interest; and they acted without any sense of responsibility. Their proceedings were generally secret; nay, secrecy was sometimes enjoined by an oath." The interests of the community they scandalously neglected; to their own they were zealously devoted. The patronage that belonged to their position they bestowed on their friends and adherents; the corporate funds that were placed in their charge they expended upon feasts and revelry. Each corporation was a corrupt and selfish oligarchy, whose demoralising influence sapped the foundations of all public virtue.

Sir Robert Peel was too wise and thoughtful a statesman to oppose the inauguration of a new and better order of things. He gave his hearty support to the Government measure, which, with some few amendments, was successfully carried through both Houses. As proposed by Lord John Russell, it vested the municipal franchise in those inhabitants who had paid poor-rates within the borough for three years; and by them the governing body, consisting of a mayor and town council, was to be elected. The ancient order of aldermen was to be no longer maintained. The pecuniary rights of existing freemen were preserved, during their lives; but their municipal franchise was superseded; and as no new freemen were to be created, the class would be eventually abolished. The councils, having been reconstituted so as to secure public confidence, were charged with fuller powers, for the police and local government of the town, and the administration

of justice. While provisions were introduced with a view to the publicity of their proceedings, the proper administration of their funds, and the publication and audit of their accounts. The Lords' amendments protected the pecuniary rights and Parliamentary franchise of freemen; exacted a property qualification for town councillors; and introduced aldermen into the council, to be elected for life,—a term which the Commons commuted to six years. And in this form was passed a measure second in interest, importance, and usefulness only to the Reform Act. The spirit of political freedom and public activity, to which our institutions owe their healthiness and stability, has been largely developed by the exercise of the privileges of self-government in our towns.

An Irish Tithe-Bill followed. This was built on the lines of the measure introduced by Sir Robert Peel, with an appropriation clause added. Sir Robert at once proposed to separate the portion of the Bill relating to tithes from that which related to the appropriation of the surplus, on the ground that when all the requirements of the Irish Church were discharged, the supposed surplus would appear as a deficiency. He was supported by Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham; but his motion was defeated by 319 votes against 282. In the Lords, however, this decision was reversed, and the appropriation clause being rejected, the Government withdrew the Bill.

In 1836 an Irish question again occupied the attention of the legislature. The Ministers submitted an Irish Corporation Reform Bill, to which Sir Robert Peel

objected that it would greatly increase the evils of party ascendancy already so fatally prevalent in Ireland, by transferring to the Roman Catholics the predominance hitherto enjoyed by the Protestants. He argued, not without justice, that in the existing condition of the "sister-country," free institutions would not work for want of the class fitted to work them; that therefore the old corporations, which were about to be abolished, should not be replaced by new corporate bodies, but that the sheriffs and recorders should be appointed by the Crown, while the local affairs of the inhabitants were managed by Commissioners, chosen by popular election.* The Government, however, persevered with their measure, which, as was usual with them, they succeeded in carrying through the Commons; but in the Lords it underwent a most extraordinary transformation. It came out of the crucible of Conservative amendment an entirely new body. Out of one hundred and forty clauses one hundred and six were deleted; eighteen fresh ones were added. The Commons necessarily rejected such wholesale reconstruction, and sent back the Bill to the Lords in nearly its original state. Lord Melbourne made an attempt to get it reconsidered; but was outvoted by a majority of 97. Nothing remained for Ministers but to withdraw it for the session.

The Government were more fortunate in dealing with the question of tithe commutation in England, and that of Dissenters' Marriages. With respect to the

* Martineau, ii. 305.

former, they virtually adopted the plan of Sir Robert Peel. With respect to the latter, they settled it by the introduction of a general and uniform system of registration, which conceded to Nonconformists all they asked without doing violence to the rights of the Church. In both cases the influence of Sir Robert Peel was freely and honourably exercised in support of the Administration. In spite of these legislative successes, the credit of the Melbourne Cabinet was rapidly declining; so many were the measures which they introduced but could not carry, so unpopular were their financial proposals,* and so deficient in nerve and firmness was their general management of public affairs. "The Whig Ministers," says no unfavourable critic, "were not men of business. They conveyed the impression of doubt about the quality and practicability of their own measures; and this was, in fact, inviting the obstruction or demolition of those measures. Every session became, to the sensations of those concerned in it, more and more like a troubled dream, wherein the sufferer is for ever struggling to get on, and for ever in vain." At the close of the session of 1837, Lord Lyndhurst brought against them a damaging indictment, which they were by no means able to "traverse" satisfactorily. "Never," he says, "was the state of business in the other House of Parliament in the situation in which it was at present—never did a government so neglect so important a part of its duty, that which it had to discharge in Parliament, as the

* It should be stated to their credit, however, that in 1836 they reduced the stamp duty on newspapers from 4*d.* to 2*d.*

Government had done during the last five months. The noble Viscount and his colleagues were utterly powerless. They were powerless alike in that and the other House; they were utterly inefficient and incompetent as servants to the Crown; and, he must add also, they were equally powerless, incapable, and inefficient, as regarded the people."

In proportion as the Ministry had suffered in repute Sir Robert Peel had risen, until the whole country had come to look forward to his accession to power as promising a golden era of prosperity and wise and efficient legislation, and he was popularly regarded as "the coming Man." The condition of affairs in the spring of 1837 is vividly depicted by a clever if somewhat cynical observer. Government had been virtually defeated on a bill for the abolition of Church-Rates, but had reintroduced their Irish Corporation Bill, and passed it through the Commons. "I hear," writes Mr. Greville, "from those who are well informed that the Lords have made up their minds to throw out this Bill. Lord John Russell has made up his to resign if they do, and in that case Peel has made up his to come in. It does not appear, however, that the great body of the Whigs are at all prepared to go out. Some doubt the Lords rejecting the Bill, others that the Tories would take office or that Melbourne and his friends would so certainly resign it. Lord Spencer wrote to John Russell, and told him that if the Lords did throw out the Bill, he thought that (being still supported by a majority of the Commons) he ought not to resign, but Lord John wrote him back decisive and convincing reasons why

his retention of office under such circumstances would be impossible. The fact is that there is a great change in the face of affairs. The small majority on the Church-Rate Bill, the unpopularity of the measure, and the discredit which attends our foreign relations, have had a material effect upon the moral efficacy of the Government. . . . The Ministers none of them possess any public confidence in their individual or official capacities; the King detests them, the country does not care for them, and the House of Commons supports them in a lukewarm spirit. If they do resign, there will be no repetition of the scenes of their former expulsion and triumphant return to power. The same enthusiasm could not be raised, nor the same union brought about. . . . Peel's undoubted fitness for office, his vast superiority to all the other public men of the day, will be more readily acknowledged; and I doubt very much whether he would experience any such factious and uncompromising opposition as would seriously obstruct the march of his Government, particularly if its composition should be tolerable, and his measures judicious and liberal." *

All speculation, however, was set aside, and a ministerial catastrophe averted, by the demise of William the Fourth, which took place on the 20th of June. The Queen, on her accession, wisely made no change in the composition of the Ministry. She was supposed to have imbibed Liberal opinions; and when Parliament was dissolved, the Whig candidates not unnaturally made

* 'The Greville Memoirs,' iii. 393, 394.

capital out of this supposition. Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. Disraeli, a rising politician, who had already acquired the reputation of a keen and ready debater, equally adroit at thrust and parry) has shown us, in the lively pages of 'Coningsby,' the humorous side of the crisis; and the newspapers of the time abound in illustrations of the resentment exhibited by the Conservatives at the appearance of their opponents in the popular character of "the friends of our young Queen." Unquestionably, the Ministers, as well as their followers, made the most of the opportunity. While the latter shouted the Queen's name on every hustings, the former surrounded the person of the Sovereign with their wives, and daughters, and sisters, who completely occupied her favour and exclusively received her confidence. This was as serious a political blunder as it was an unchivalrous proceeding; for it was obvious that when the Conservatives came into power they would dismiss, in self-defence, the female emissaries of Whiggism; and thus the Liberal Ministers were preparing an humiliation for themselves, and for their Queen the unpleasantness of losing her personal attendants. It is a striking sign of the discredit which had fallen upon Lord Melbourne's Cabinet, that, in the new Parliament, though summoned under such favourable auspices, they could command only a majority of twelve.

It was at this time that a banquet was given to Sir Robert Peel by the Conservative members of the House of Commons, no fewer than 313 signatures being attached to the invitation. He willingly accepted it, for it enabled him to to address an exposition of his political faith to

the nation at large, while he justified to his followers the policy which, as their leader, he had enforced upon them. After describing the circumstances which had induced him to undertake the formation of a Conservative party, and eulogising the men whose support had encouraged him in the enterprise—the Duke of Wellington, Lord Stanley, and Sir James Graham—he proceeded to congratulate them upon its solidarity and strength, and to show how great an influence it had exercised upon the conduct of the Government and the course of legislation. "Twice," he said, "a dissolution has taken place under circumstances calculated to determine whether we have or have not the confidence of the public. One dissolution took place when we were in power; the other when power was in the hands of our opponents. On the first dissolution, in 1835, when I was at the head of the Government of the country, the Conservative members were suddenly swollen from about 150 to more than double that number. I believe we divided, on the nomination of the Speaker, 306 members. But it was then said:—'You owe success to the possession of power; wait till another dissolution takes place, wait till your opponents exercise those functions of government which you discharged when Parliament was assembled in 1835, and be prepared for a reduction in your numbers more rapid and striking than their increase.' Well, to that second test we have at length been submitted. The dissolution took place in the course of last year with every circumstance calculated to be favourable to those in power. There was the accession of a youthful and beloved Queen; there was one universal feeling of personal loyalty and attach-

ment towards the Sovereign ascending the throne, with everything to prepossess in her favour; there was a lavish use of her Majesty's name for the purpose of influencing the election; still, the result of the general election exhibited our numbers unbroken; for, as we voted 306, having had all the advantages of a dissolution during the tenure of government, the names attached to the invitation of this day, comprising 313 members of the House of Commons, will, I think, sufficiently demonstrate that, notwithstanding adverse predictions to the contrary, the public confidence has not permitted our numbers to be reduced in consequence of the second dissolution."

Sir Robert ingeniously checked the impatience of his party to overthrow the existing Government, while still allowing them to hope for an early return to office. "We must bear in mind," he said, "that the particular course which an Opposition should take must partly depend on the principles they maintain. Our more impatient friends in the country must recollect that our very name almost implies a contradiction. We are a Conservative opposition; we adopt the principles which used to be said to prevail in an administration; we not only adopt the principles of a government, but we perform many of its functions; and we cannot, in conformity with our opinions, take that latitude of action which might befit an opposition acting on precisely contrary principles—an opposition which professed to think the ancient institutions of the country a grievance, which considered English society as a mass of abuse." He also pointed out the mode in which they controlled the

administration of the country, by enabling the Government to withstand the subversive efforts of their own friends and supporters, as, for example, to exclude the bishops from the House of Lords, to repeal the customs duties, and to introduce vote by ballot. And, in conclusion, he entreated his followers to persevere in the same course of action; by which, though they delivered the Ministry from successive embarrassments, they established for themselves new claims on the confidence and approbation of the country.

In the session of 1838 the old spectres of Irish Tithe Bills, Irish Poor-law Bills, and Irish Corporation Bills, reappeared upon the parliamentary stage. But the only one of these of which the Ministry got rid was the Poor-law Bill, constructed on the same principles as the English Poor-law. The damaged reputation of the Government sustained another heavy blow through their mismanagement of Canadian affairs; and the skill and coolness of Sir Robert Peel were needed to solve the difficulties into which their blunders plunged them. In Lower Canada, the French population, not without the advice and co-operation of some of the British colonists, rebelled against the imperial authority. Towards the close of 1836, the Government resolved on sending out the Earl of Durham to attempt the pacification of the revolted province, and concert such measures of colonial government as might prevent any future outbreaks. The Earl was a man of known firmness and liberality, with considerable breadth of view and tenacity of purpose, in many respects admirably fitted for the office to which he was called; but, unfortunately, his excellent gifts

were much impaired by his irritability of disposition and impetuosity of temper. On his arrival in Canada he saw that his first step must be to re-establish order. He accordingly issued, in the Queen's name, a proclamation of amnesty, from which certain names were exempted. In his second proclamation he dealt with these exceptions. By the Act of Parliament under which he exercised his powers, it was provided that he should be advised by a council, and that every ordinance he issued should be countersigned by not fewer than five of its members. The Earl, however, impatient of control or delay, set aside the representative council already in existence, and substituted for it one composed of his secretaries, two military secretaries, and the commissary-general, all of whom were unacquainted with Canada, and would of course assent to whatever the governor-general prescribed. Having thus evaded the obligation imposed upon him by Parliament, he proceeded to issue an ordinance, countersigned by these five officials, which inflicted the punishment of transportation upon certain of the insurgents.* As soon as these proceedings were known in England, they were vehemently denounced by the Opposition in the House of Lords, and especially by Lord Brougham, who was thus enabled to gratify a personal hostility towards the Earl of Durham, and his animosity against the Government which had presumed to dispense with his services. He proceeded to bring in a bill to amend the Canada Act, in which he greatly limited the powers

* This was illegal, the Governor-General's jurisdiction not reaching out of Canada.

of the Governor-General, and proposed to indemnify all persons concerned in the issue of the illegal ordinance. The ungenerous character of the Bill, as fettering the hands of a servant of the Crown who had been intrusted with a delicate and difficult mission, was obvious to unprejudiced critics. But the second reading was carried by 54 to 36, and the Ministry, too feeble to defend their own agents and adherents, intimated that they had advised the Crown to disallow the ordinance. The Earl of Durham was not unnaturally mortified by the indignity thus laid upon him. He abruptly abandoned his post, and, without waiting for a recall, returned to England to die of a broken heart. His place was filled by Mr. Poulett Thomson, who took up his plans, and worked them out with great success, supported by Lord John Russell, who had been appointed Colonial Secretary.

The Melbourne Government had scarcely steered clear of this dangerous rock, when the current of ill-fortune that so constantly beset them, drove them full upon another.* The opening months of the year

* The miserable plight of the Whig Government at this time is amusingly ridiculed in some keen satirical verses by Winthrop Mackworth Praed (first published by Mr. Trevelyan) :—

"Sure none should better know how sweet
The tenure of official seat
Than one who every session buys
At such high rate the gaudy prize;
One who for this so long has borne
The scowl of universal scorn. . .
And, truth to say, it must be pleasant
To be a Minister at present:
To make believe to guide the realm
Without a hand upon the helm,

1839 witnessed the voluntary termination by the colonial legislature of the system of apprenticeship which had been introduced as a kind of transition from Negro slavery to absolute freedom. In Jamaica, however, the Home Government had been compelled to apply

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And wonder what with such a crew
A pilot e'er should find to do;
To hold what people are content
To fancy is the government,
And touch extremely little of it
Except the credit and the profit;
When Follett pauses, (*a*) Sugden poses, (*b*)
To bid gay Stanley (*c*) count the noses,
And leave the Cabinet's defence
To Bulwer's wit and Blewitt's sense;
To hear demands of explanation
On India, Belgium, trade, taxation,
And answer that perhaps they'll try
To give an answer by and by;
To save the Church, and save the Crown,
By letting others pull them down;
To promise, pause, prepare, postpone,
And end by letting things alone;
In short, to earn the people's pay
By doing nothing every day;
These tasks, these joys, the Fates assign
The well-placed Whigs in Thirty-nine."

(*a*) Sir William Follett, one of the most brilliant of English lawyers, whose career was unfortunately terminated by a premature death.

(*b*) Sir Edward Sugden, afterwards Lord St. Leonards, and Lord Chancellor.

(*c*) The late Lord Stanley of Alderley, then Secretary to the Treasury and Government "Whip."—"The traditions of the lobby," says Mr. Trevelyan, "still point to his tenure of office as the culminating epoch in the art of Parliamentary management."

some pressure to the House of Assembly; and the House, in return, refused to pass the laws which were necessary for the proper administration of the Colony. Such being the case, Lord Melbourne resolved on proposing to Parliament a suspension of the constitution of Jamaica for five years, during which period the affairs of the island were to be administered by a provisional government. But the Bill introduced for this purpose encountered the opposition not only of Sir Robert Peel and his followers, but of Mr. Hume and several Radical members, who saw in it a violation of Liberal principles. Sir Robert Peel's speech was very effective. He regretted, he said, that some compromise had not been made with the Jamaica legislature, so as to obviate the necessity of a Suspension Bill, which could be justifiable, if justifiable at all, only in the most extreme cases. For what was its object? Nothing less than the entire abrogation for a time of the constitution and liberties of Jamaica; whose four hundred thousand white inhabitants were to be ruled by a despotic governor and council, responsible only to the Home Government; a governor and council, to whom, amongst other inordinate and enormous powers, was to be given the right of taxing the community to an extent of little less than half a million yearly! Could no measure of efficiency be devised short of the concession of powers such as these, for the control of a community accustomed to self-government, and with all the feelings of the population now constituting the United States of North America? He then contrasted the language which the Ministry had used respect-

ing the Jamaica House of Assembly a few weeks before, with that which had fallen from them in the present debate; the compliments which the Governor had quite recently paid to the Assembly, with the tyrannical harshness of the enactment now proposed; adding, "Why, the preamble of the Bill ought to run thus: 'Whereas compliments have been paid by the Governor to the House of Assembly; and whereas those compliments were never intended; and whereas, therefore, they ought not to be pleaded as obstacles to the passing of this Bill.' Let them have this inserted, in order that posterity, looking at their compliments and their acts, might say, that never were enactments so inconsistent with—so contradictory to—declarations and assurances!"

After enlarging upon the effect which the proposed measure could not but exercise on the southern states of the great American Republic, and the proof it afforded that free institutions were apparently incompatible with Negro emancipation, Sir Robert remarked that he did not present himself as the advocate of the Assembly. He would not recall any of the expressions in which he had condemned their conduct. He regretted deeply the very injudicious course they had adopted. It would have been infinitely better if they had performed their duties, and cordially co-operated in furthering the grand experiment which the people of England were entitled to see fulfilled. He repeated, he was not the Assembly's advocate. He blamed their language; he censured their acts. But the question before them was, did that language and those acts justify the House in

suspending the constitution of Jamaica? He foresaw the time when they would wish they had attended to his suggestion. He desired them to pause; to remonstrate; to see what could be effected by Time, that great assuager of human passions as well as human woes; that, in short, they would give the House of Assembly leisure to reflect upon their conduct, and to become aware of its impropriety. If they made but one overture for adjustment and failed, he would promise them his cordial support to carry any measure the exigency of the case might then require.

After commenting on the singular position in which the House would stand if it now called upon the Lords to support it in crushing the privileges of a popular Assembly, when only on the 22nd of April it had resisted, as a breach of its privileges, an inquiry instituted by the Upper Chamber into the conduct of the Irish Government, Sir Robert Peel said, in conclusion:—"Is the House, I ask, prepared to take this course? If it is, it will place itself in a most strange position, which may eventually jeopardize some of its own dearest privileges. And let me add that if you are prone to take amiss all intemperance—every violent expression—every act of indiscretion in a popular Assembly; if you have no fraternal sympathy with other representative bodies; if you are ready to pluck out the mote that is in your brother's eye, heedless of the beam that is in your own; I still will hope that the example which you are about to set may never, under any future circumstances, be pleaded in derogation of your own privileges, and that you may

yourselves escape a fate which would not be unjust;—for remember, with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again!"

That Sir Robert Peel was right in principle we entertain no doubt, and such was the opinion of a formidable minority in the House of Commons, the Ministry carrying the second reading of their Bill by five votes only (294 to 289). Such a victory was as bad as a defeat; and the Government placed their resignations in the hands of the Queen; on the evening of Tuesday, May the 7th, announcing that they held office only until their successors were appointed. They alleged as their reasons for retiring, that the Jamaica Assembly would believe itself countenanced in contumacy by the British Parliament; and that the authority of the Crown would be so greatly weakened in that and other colonies, that Ministers could not undertake to govern them. On Wednesday, the Queen sought the advice of the Duke of Wellington, who being of opinion that the Prime Minister should sit in the House of Commons, recommended her to send for Sir Robert Peel. She acted on this advice; but her first words to Sir Robert, clearly as they showed the truthfulness of her character, just as clearly showed that she had not yet acquired that grasp of true constitutional principles which has since marked her actions. She plainly intimated that she was much grieved to part with her late Ministers, whose conduct she entirely approved. However, Sir Robert undertook to form a new Administration, and everything went smoothly until his attention was directed to the compo-

sition of the Royal Household. Then he was disagreeably impressed by the completeness of the arrangements for surrounding the Queen with the nearest relatives of the Whig Ministers.* For instance, the great difficulty before Sir Robert Peel,—as, indeed, before any other British statesman,—was the government of Ireland, on which his policy was in direct opposition to the policy of Lords Normanby and Morpeth; yet the two ladies in closest attendance upon the Queen were the wife of Lord Normanby and the sister of Lord Morpeth. Sir Robert, acting, as was afterwards acknowledged, upon his strict constitutional right, resolved to propose no change in the offices below that of Lady of the Bedchamber. He hoped that the ladies who held the higher offices would resign of their own accord; if not, he was determined to propose a change. As much as this he intimated to the Queen, who, however, as at a later period seems to have been admitted, misunderstood him, and supposed him to contemplate the removal of all her servants and household friends. She stopped him in his expression of a desire to consult her predilections by declaring that she would allow of no change in the female appointments of her Household. On referring for advice to Lord John Russell, he pronounced her Majesty in the right; and she then requested him to support her now, as she had before supported him and his colleagues. To Lord Melbourne and the Duke of Wellington she also referred: the latter gave it as his opinion that if the Queen persisted

* Hansard, 4th series, xlvii. 984.

in her determination Sir Robert must retire: the former summoned a meeting of his colleagues, who, in council, recommended her Majesty to address the following note to Sir Robert Peel:—"The Queen, having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel, to remove the Ladies of the Bedchamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings." Without delay Sir Robert Peel replied (May 20th):—"Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and has had the honour of receiving your Majesty's note of this morning. In respectfully submitting to your Majesty's pleasure, and humbly returning into your Majesty's hands the important trust which your Majesty had been graciously pleased to commit to him, Sir Robert Peel trusts that your Majesty will permit him to state to your Majesty his impression with respect to the circumstances which have led to the termination of his attempt to form an administration for the conduct of your Majesty's service. In the interview with which your Majesty honoured Sir Robert Peel yesterday morning, after he had submitted to your Majesty the names of those whom he proposed to recommend to your Majesty for the principal executive appointments, he mentioned to your Majesty his earnest wish to be enabled, with your Majesty's sanction, so to constitute your Majesty's household that your Majesty's servants might have the advantage of a public demonstration of your Majesty's full support and confidence, and that at the same time, so far as possible, consistently with that demonstration,

each individual appointment in the household should be entirely acceptable to your Majesty's personal feelings. On your Majesty's expressing a desire that the Earl of Liverpool should hold an office in the household, Sir Robert Peel requested your Majesty's permission at once to offer to Lord Liverpool the office of Lord Steward, or any other which he may prefer. Sir Robert Peel then observed that he should have every wish to apply a similar principle to the chief appointments which are filled by the ladies of your Majesty's household; upon which your Majesty was pleased to remark that you must reserve the whole of those appointments and that it was your Majesty's pleasure that the whole should continue as at present, without any change.

"The Duke of Wellington, in the interview to which your Majesty subsequently admitted him, understood also that this was your Majesty's determination, and concurred with Sir Robert Peel in opinion that, considering the great difficulties of the present crisis, and the expediency of making every effort, in the first instance, to conduct the public business of the country with the aid of the present Parliament, it was essential to the success of the commission with which your Majesty had honoured Sir Robert Peel, that he should have that public proof of your Majesty's entire support and confidence which would be afforded by the permission to make some changes in that part of your Majesty's household which your Majesty resolved on maintaining entirely without change.

"Having had the opportunity, through your Majesty's gracious consideration, of reflecting upon this point, he

humbly submits to your Majesty that he is reluctantly compelled, by a sense of public duty and the interests of your Majesty's service, to adhere to the opinion which he ventured to express to your Majesty.

"He trusts he may be permitted at the same time to express to your Majesty his grateful acknowledgments for the distinction which your Majesty conferred upon him, in requiring his advice and assistance in the attempt to form an administration, and his earnest prayers that whatever arrangements your Majesty may be enabled to make for that purpose, may be most conducive to your Majesty's personal comfort and happiness, and in (to ?) the promotion of the public welfare."*

The Melbourne Ministers now resumed their places, and in this unsatisfactory way terminated one of the most curious and semi-comical episodes in our Parliamentary history. It was a laughable, and yet a melancholy spectacle, to see the leaders of the great Whig party taking shelter "behind the petticoats of their wives and sisters," and leaning upon their delicate arms to steady their faltering steps. We agree with Mr. Trevelyan that, whether the part which they played was or was not forced upon them by circumstances, —and for ourselves we hold that it was of their own choosing,—their example was disastrous in its effect upon English public life.† They resigned because

* Doubleday, 'Political Life of Sir Robert Peel, ii. 274–277.

† Lord Brougham was no honest or impartial critic of the Melbourne Cabinet, but he was clearly justified in his attack upon their conduct on this occasion:—"I thought," he said, "that we belonged to a country in

they could not conduct the government of the country; they returned to office, not because they were stronger in repute, capacity, character, or influence, but because the Queen, acting on their advice, clung to the ladies of the Bedchamber. As for Sir Robert Peel, everybody now admits that he acted within his constitutional right. Yet it is difficult to believe that, had no other embarrassments been in his path, he would have allowed a few ladies of the Bedchamber to exclude him from the service of his country, or deprive him of the reward of an honourable ambition. We think it more creditable to his foresight and patience to assume that he was not wholly convinced of the prudence of accepting office at such a juncture; and that he not unwillingly availed himself of the reluctance of his opponents to surrender it.

The Melbourne Cabinet, on resuming their places, were compelled to deal with the Jamaica difficulty, and delivered themselves from it by the simple expedient of proposing a bill such as Sir Robert Peel was prepared to

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which the government by the crown and the wisdom of Parliament was everything, and the personal feelings of the sovereign absolutely not to be named at the same time; to be, of course, most respectfully venerated, but never to be allowed to interfere with the sober judgment of Parliament, to countervail the highest interest of the State. . . . I little thought, in this advanced period of our history, to be obliged to argue this question with Whigs, the descendants of the Ministers who, because they would not subscribe to this creed, refused to be Ministers in 1812. I little thought to have lived to hear it said by the Whigs of 1839, 'Let us rally round the Queen; never mind the House of Commons, never mind measures; throw principles to the dogs; leave pledges unredeemed; but, for God's sake, rally round the throne.'"

assist in carrying. They prorogued Parliament as quickly as possible; and the condition of the country was so terrible with the sufferings resulting from a succession of bad harvests and the dulness of trade, with the ferment and fever of the Chartist agitation, and the sudden outburst of feeling against the Corn Laws, that they may well be excused for desiring to devote their energies to its improvement without the distraction of Parliamentary warfare. They opened the session of 1840 with fear and trembling; but secured a temporary respite by introducing the arrangements necessary in connection with the Queen's marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe Gotha. Lord John Russell proposed that an annuity of £50,000 should be settled on the Prince; Mr. Hume moved that the amount should be reduced to £21,000. This pittance was rejected by a large majority. On the other hand, the Ministerial proposal seemed excessive in view of the distressed condition of the country; and the Opposition suggested instead a yearly allowance of £30,000. Lord John Russell, losing temper, declared that the amendment was disrespectful to the Queen; thereby bringing down upon himself a rebuke from Sir Robert Peel. Eventually the amendment was adopted by a majority of 104 in a House of 420.* The marriage took place on the 10th of February.

Seldom has the condition of the country been more dark and dreary than in this year of the royal marriage. The labouring classes suffered from wide-spread destitution. Work was scarce in the manufacturing districts; and the discontent that is always engendered by poverty

* Martineau, ii. 404.

lent an alarming degree of strength to the wild agitation of the Chartists. Wages were exceptionally low; and the high price of wheat, artificially stimulated by the Corn Laws, exposed the proletariat to the dread of absolute famine. There was everywhere a feeling of gloom and apprehension. The Constitution did not seem so stable as men had supposed it; even the Throne appeared to rock uneasily. When the Queen went abroad she was encountered by a chilling silence, or, what was worse, by manifestations of open dislike. Nature seemed to conspire to increase the general alarm, for storms were numerous and disastrous. In all quarters the outlook was cloudy. Ireland was on the verge of rebellion. There had been fresh troubles in Canada. In India men seemed to be living under the shadow of some imminent peril. At such a crisis men derive great comfort from the knowledge that public affairs are in the hands of a strong Government; but unfortunately, the Melbourne Government, though it contained some able men, was *not* strong; did not feel itself strong, and did not give the world any confidence in its strength. It had excellent ideas of what ought to be done, but did not do it. It was for ever hesitating on the brink of good intentions. It was always in a sickly and despondent state, so that its best friends could wish for it nothing better than its enemies desired for it, a speedy euthanasia. But, somehow or other, it would not or could not die. It persisted in dragging on an attenuated existence. It escaped a motion of want of confidence aimed at it by Sir John Yarde Buller. Like Milton's angels it was composed of a substance which,

however often and however severely wounded, closed up again immediately, and presented scarcely a mark or scar. It was capable of being pulled in this direction or in that, of being rolled up like a ball, or flattened like a sheet of paper; and, somehow or other, of always recovering its original shape. If the Melbourne Ministry could do nothing else, it could *live*. However, it *did* do something else. It adopted Sir Rowland Hill's plan of an uniform penny postage; and this in the face of a large deficit. And it carried its long-delayed measure of Irish municipal reform. It derived some degree of credit, moreover, from the bold policy of its Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, who had succeeded by his promptitude of action in delivering Syria from the ambition of Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, and by the capture of Acre renewed the prestige of the British arms.

So far as the Government was concerned, it began the session of 1841 with injured prospects. Its diplomacy had succeeded, and the English people pardon a good deal to the successful. It was no great gain, perhaps, to have struck a blow on behalf of the Turkish empire; but the blow had hit the mark, which is always the chief consideration with the public. Moreover, a revival of trade seemed to be in progress, and the din of agitation had partially subsided. General surprise and disappointment, therefore, prevailed, when the Queen's speech made no mention of the measures of the progressive reform which, by common consent, were allowed to be needed. It was evident, as Mr. Molesworth remarks, that the trust of the Ministry was in the favour of the Queen rather than in the confidence of the House of Commons and

the support of the people; and though such a state of things could not survive an outburst of popular excitement, it might probably endure as long as the political calm lasted. The Ministry, thinking more of office than of power or fame, were careful to introduce no large measures, because they knew they had not the strength to carry them. They succeeded in passing a bill for the abolition of the punishment of death in certain crimes, but failed with their Irish registration proposal. Goaded at length into a bold effort to recover their popularity, they resolved to avail themselves of the rapidly increasing hostility towards the Corn Laws. Two years before, Macaulay, quick to discern the signs of the times, had written:—"The cry for free-trade in corn seems to be very formidable. . . . If the Ministers play their game well, they may now either triumph completely, or retire with honour. They have excellent cards, if they know how to use them." But it was the doom of this unfortunate Ministry never to be in time; and when they had good cards to play them too late, or play them unskilfully. They might have assumed the guidance of the Free Trade movement, and earned the liberal gratitude of the people. But Lord Melbourne had declared in the House of Lords that of the many mad things he had heard in his life, the idea of repealing the Corn Laws was the maddest. And only in the previous year Lord John Russell, when Mr. Villiers had given notice of a motion that evidence on the operation of the Corn Laws should be heard at the bar of the House of Commons, had strongly opposed it. It is true that he expressed his disapproval of the Corn Laws in the abstract, but he manifested no intention of carrying

his disapproval further. Apparently he did not recognise the change in public feeling and opinion which was taking place through the labours of Richard Cobden and the earnest eloquence of John Bright.* The majority in the Commons against the motion (February 18th, 1839) was 361 to 192, and Government affected to feel that the question was disposed of. When, therefore, in the session of 1841, they changed front; when Lord John Russell announced his intention of moving, on the 31st of May, a resolution to the effect that the House in Committee should consider the Act of Parliament relating to the trade in corn, it was too palpably a strategic move, a device to recruit the exhausted popularity of the country, to arouse the popular enthusiasm.

But it was not destined to afford the Government a new departure. Before Lord John Russell's motion could be considered, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward his Budget, with its alarming deficit of £2,101,370. To raise the income of the country to a level with its expenditure, Mr. Baring proposed certain changes in the timber and sugar duties. With respect to the latter, a reduction of the duty on foreign sugar, the Opposition joined issue, urging that it was an encouragement of the sugar produce of the Spanish plantations where slave labour was allowed, as against that of our own colonies, where slavery had been abolished. Another feature of the Budget was also strongly attacked, a fixed duty on the importation of corn. In the debate which ensued

* The Anti-Corn Law League began its important work in 1838.

the whole policy of the Government came under review, and its inability to maintain its ground against the assault of the compact body of able statesmen, led by Sir Robert Peel, was painfully apparent. Defeat, indeed, was a foregone conclusion; and on the question that the Speaker do now leave the chair, in order that the House might go into Committee on the Budget, the majority against the Government was 36 (317 to 281). Everybody now supposed that they would at last retire, that they had drunk the cup of humiliation to the dregs; and the House hardly knew whether to break into a storm of indignation or a shout of scornful laughter, when, next evening, as if nothing had occurred, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that, on the Monday following, he should move the usual sugar duties, after which Lord John Russell moved the adjournment of the House to that Monday. The Earl of Darlington, in a single sentence of contemptuous astonishment, asked when the noble Lord proposed to take the question of the Corn Laws. He replied, on the 4th of June; and "an unhappy member began upon the grievances of the Royal Marines, amidst the buzz of conversation, expressive of gratified or disappointed curiosity, with which, after a thrilling episode, the House relieves its own nerves, and tortures those of the wretch whose ambition or ill-luck has exposed him to the most formidable ordeal which can be inflicted on a public speaker."*

* G. O. Trevelyan, 'Life of Macaulay,' ii. 90; Martineau, ii. 438; Alison, vi. 432; Molesworth, ii. 65.

It was now evident that the Government intended to cling to office, and go to the country with the cry of "cheap bread." But they had to deal with a skilful Parliamentary tactician, who was by no means disposed to allow them an easy victory. When the question of the sugar duties came on, he seconded the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposal for their continuance on the old footing, and gave notice that, on the 31st of May, he should move:—"That Her Majesty's Ministers do not sufficiently possess the confidence of the House of Commons to enable them to carry through the House measures which they deem of essential importance to the public welfare, and that their continuance in office under such circumstances is at variance with the spirit of the constitution. The debate was one of surpassing excellence. Sir Robert's speech was dispassionate and carefully reasoned, but it presented against the Government a most formidable indictment. The conclusion ran as follows:—"The noble Lord (John Russell) was the author of the Bill by which this House of Commons was constituted. It was he who thought it expedient to abolish the system of nomination-boroughs. It was he who introduced more of the popular spirit into the constitution of this House, to make it, as he said, correspond more with the progress of popular intelligence and the spread of knowledge. To achieve this, the noble Lord thought that we ought to make the House more truly the express image of public opinion, an assembly more sympathising with the people, more originating from the people, more expressive of the popular mind. The House of Commons, thus constituted according to the views of the noble lord,

—this House of Commons,—had the advantage (if it could be so considered) of being elected under the noble lord's auspices; and whatever benefit there possibly might be from having had its election at the time when her gracious Majesty came to the throne of these kingdoms, that benefit, also, the noble lord possessed. Yet this House of Commons, so constituted, so elected, under the very auspices of the noble lord, this House of Commons it is that has given, I think, sufficient indications that it withholds its confidence from that Government, of which the noble lord is so conspicuous a member. I trust that I have executed this duty in conformity with the spirit with which I intended to execute it, with no mixture of that asperity of party into which I may sometimes have been betrayed, when rising at the close of a debate, to speak under that excitement and agitation that naturally attend that period of our deliberations. It has not been my intention to treat with disrespect those who hold the executive offices of government, but it has been my intention to say to them:—It is your duty to the House of Commons—if it have those additional claims to the public respect which you ascribe to it—if it embodies more of the public spirit, if it reflects more accurately the image of the popular mind than those that have preceded it, then it is your duty, nay, your peculiar duty, not to deprive it of any of the legitimate influence which it possessed under other circumstances, and which you were the first to recognise and to seek to extend. Of this I am convinced, that if the House of Commons so constituted, had ratified your decrees, had acted in conformity with your suggestions, you would have been the

first to bow to its opinions with respect; and now let me tell you that, when the House of Commons sees fit to choose a different course, it is your bounden duty not to reject its decisions with scorn, because they are now unfavourable to your views, and hostile to your continuance in power."

The defeat of Ministers was, of course, inevitable. Sir Robert Peel's resolution was carried by a majority of one (312 to 311); and the Government, after some brief consideration, determined on risking an appeal to the country. Within three weeks Parliament was dissolved, and the country plunged into the turmoil of a general election. The Conservatives addressed themselves to every class of persons who had been injured, or imagined they had been injured, by the measures of the Whig Ministry. They reminded the moneyed interest of the financial collapse which had attended their efforts; the landed and shipping interests, of the losses they had sustained; the manufacturers, of the ill effects of a feeble administration. The Whigs took their stand upon the proposition of a fixed duty on corn, a proposition which necessarily failed to engage the interest of the masses. Had they uplifted the banner of Free Trade the result might have been different, though it is doubtful whether they could, under any circumstances, have conquered the want of confidence in their administrative capacity which had been engendered by a long series of failures. As it was, they disheartened their supporters by the timidity with which they handled the most pressing question of the day. Their defeat was thorough. In the English counties the Conservatives gained twenty-

two seats, in the boroughs seven. In Scotland they gained two, and in Ireland eight. On the whole, it was calculated that in the new Parliament Sir Robert Peel would command a majority of about seventy-six.* This, however, was not so much a triumph of Conservative opinion, as a censure upon the inefficiency of the Melbourne Administration, and a vote of confidence in Sir Robert Peel as the statesman best qualified to deal with the difficulties of the situation.

The new Parliament assembled on August the 19th, Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell meeting at the bar, and shaking hands "very cordially." Mr. Shaw Lefevre was re-elected Speaker without opposition; then came the Queen's Speech; the Address, and an amendment on the Address, moved simultaneously in both Houses, which expressed the alarm of Parliament at the continued excess of expenditure over income, promised a careful consideration of the interests commended to them, but declared that nothing could be done while the Government did not possess the con-

* "North of Trent the Whigs held their ground, but throughout the southern districts of England they were smitten hip and thigh from Lincoln to St. Ives. The adherents of the Government had to surrender something of their predominance in the boroughs, while those who sat for the counties were turned out in shoals. There were whole shires which sent back their writs inscribed with an unbroken tale of Protectionists. All the ten Essex members were Conservatives, in town and country alike; and so were all the twelve members for Shropshire. Before the Irish returns had come to hand, it was already evident that the Ministerial loss would be equivalent to a hundred votes on a stand-and-fall division. The Whigs had experienced no equally grave reverse since, in 1784, Pitt scattered to the winds the Coalition majority."—G. O. TREVELYAN, 'Life of Lord Macaulay, ii. 92.

fidence of the House or of the country, and asserted that her Majesty's present advisers did not possess that confidence. In the Lords the Amendment was carried by a majority of 72; in the Commons, by a majority of 91. A quarter of a century elapsed before the Liberal party recovered from this defeat, and under the auspices of Mr. Gladstone resumed the work of reform, with a larger majority than, in 1841, supported Sir Robert Peel.

Sir Robert spoke at the close of the debate, following Mr. O'Connell, and some passages from his speech must here be quoted, in illustration both of his character as a statesman and his career as a Minister. With his crushing retort upon the Irish agitator it is not necessary to concern ourselves. His reference to the Corn Laws was an unmistakeable abandonment of the old Tory position:—"If you ask me," he said, "whether I bind myself to the maintenance of the existing law in its details, or if you say that such is the condition or compact on which the agricultural interest give me their support, I say on that condition I will not accept their support. . . . I repeat, I must reserve to myself the unfettered power of considering details. Now, you are not satisfied, I know. The whole stream of obloquy that has been directed against me, and which, after an experience of about thirty years, has produced as little of irritation or of uncomfortable feeling in my mind as it would perhaps in that of any man, has flowed from this:—that I will not now state what alterations I mean to propose. . . . I ask any reasonable man whether a more preposterous demand was ever made upon a public

man than that he should not only declare his preference of a principle, but explain to the whole world, and bind himself irrevocably to the mode in which he thinks to carry it out?"

In concluding, he said:—"With my views of government, with my views of the obligation which it imposes, of the duties which it entails, of the sacrifices which it involves, I am little disposed indeed to add to those sacrifices by accepting it with a degrading or a dishonourable condition. I am told, sir, that in the exercise of power, I must be the instrument of maintaining opinions and feelings which I myself am disposed to repudiate. I am told that I must necessarily be the instrument of effecting objects in Ireland which I myself disapprove. I am asked whether I dare affront my associates and partisans. The honourable member for Meath [Mr. Henry Grattan] alluded to the conduct of a public functionary in Ireland, who, he said, had offered an insult to the religious feelings of his fellow-countrymen, by some public act of a most offensive nature. I am not afraid of expressing my opinion with respect to acts like this; and I say at once, that there is no man in this House, no Roman Catholic member of this House, who could hear with pain deeper than I did, or deeper regret than I did, that a gratuitous and unprovoked insult, and an unnecessary insult, had been offered to the religious feelings of the people of Ireland. If I cannot gain power or retain it except by encouraging and favouring such feelings, I say at once, that the day on which I relinquish power, rather than defer to such feelings, will be a ten times prouder one than the day

on which I obtained it. If I do accept office, it shall be by no intrigue; it shall be after no unworthy concession of constitutional principle; it shall be by no unnatural and factious combinations with men—honest I believe them to be—entertaining extreme opinions from which I entirely dissent. If I attain office, it shall be by walking in the open light, and in the direct paths of the constitution. If I exercise power, it shall be upon my conception—perhaps imperfect, perhaps mistaken—but yet my sincere conception of public duty. That power, I repeat, I will not hold unless I can hold it consistently with the maintenance of my own opinions; and that power I will relinquish the moment I am satisfied that I am not supported in the maintenance of them by the confidence of this House and the people of this country."

The resignation of Lord Melbourne and his colleagues took place immediately upon this overwhelming defeat, and was announced by Lord John Russell in the Commons on the 30th of August.*

* The Melbourne Ministry fell without honour, and none but the hangers-on of office regretted its demise. "Men had waited long," says Miss Martineau, "if not patiently, for this issue; and the general satisfaction was evident enough. Perhaps it was worth waiting so long to see the exhaustion so complete. It afforded every needful advantage to the incoming Administration; and it yielded a striking lesson to all governments and their constituents. No government had a fairer chance than that of the Whigs from popular and royal favour—no government had a clearer task to perform, or more aids and supports and stimulus in the performance; and, when it became apparent where the want of strength and clearness lay—that their principles were weak, their views obscure, their purposes fluctuating, their knowledge deficient, and their political honour relaxed—no ministry of such popular promise ever sank so low. It was well for the

political morality of the country that the case was so clear—made so clear at last by the suicidal appeal to the country in the elections. This clear exposition of the case might afford some reparation—the only reparation possible—for the mischief of a long retention of office by men who could not, with all means of power in their hands, govern the country." One of its most illustrious members, Macaulay, expressed his satisfaction at a catastrophe which released him from "a Government wretchedly weak, and struggling for existence." Why was it so weak? Because it wanted a policy, and a leader, It lived from "hand to mouth;" always waiting, Micawber-like, for something to turn up: prolonging a miserable life by every kind of shift and expedient; bringing forward measures, not, apparently, from any firm conviction of their necessity or value, but because they seemed to catch some prosperous current of public opinion; and dropping them at anybody's bidding, without the slightest evidence of compunction or humiliation. The Premier and his colleagues were men of ability. A Cabinet could not be considered contemptible which included a Melbourne, a Russell, a Palmerston, and a Macaulay. But it wanted a leader; a man capable of giving a definite shape to the convictions of his colleagues, of possessing a clear and intelligible course of action; a man whose earnestness and intellectual power would be felt and acknowledged by the country. Not such was Lord Melbourne. A fine scholar, a consummate gentleman, a good debater,—but nothing more, His *procurantism* was enough to demoralize any Cabinet. He was always for leaving things alone. No doubt there are times when it is the highest wisdom to do nothing; but doing nothing always is not the statesmanship that recommends itself to the English people. And Lord Melbourne was dangerously fond of ministerial ease. As for his colleagues, who among them was fitted to guide and inspirit and consolidate a great party? Hence the wonder is, not that the Melbourne Ministry fell so ingloriously, but that it had not fallen long before. Lord Melbourne never again held office; in truth, he immediately ceased to occupy an influential position in the world of politics. The trusted adviser and political teacher of his sovereign, and the official head for years of the Liberal party—passed from the stage almost suddenly and noiselessly; and no one cared to ask what had become of him. So complete an effacement of a public man can hardly be paralleled in our history; and yet the reason of it is not difficult to discover. He had never represented a principle; his name was not associated with any great legislative achievement; and he had never exhibited any popular sympathies, A combination of circumstances had placed him in the premiership; but he had not won his way to it. It was not his by

right of conquest; and men had never followed with interest the successive stages of an illustrious career, as they had done in the case of Peel, until the crown of all was reached by the patience and courage of genius. Therefore, they felt no concern when the curtain fell upon the scene, and the well-graced actor appeared no more. We know not where to look for a better portrait of the cool, cynical, clever, and yet by no means indolent ex-Premier than in Sydney Smith's second letter to Archdeacon Singleton (*Works*, iii. 216):—"Viscount Melbourne," he says, "declared himself quite satisfied with the Church as it is; but if the public had any desire to alter it, they might do as they pleased. He might have said the same thing of the monarchy, or of any other of our institutions; and there is in the declaration a permissiveness and good humour which in public men has seldom been exceeded. Carelessness, however, is but a poor imitation of genius; and the formation of a wise and well-reflected plan of reform conduces more to the lasting fame of a Minister than that affected contempt of duty which every man sees to be mere vanity, and a vanity of no very high description. But if the truth must be told, our Viscount is somewhat of an impostor. Everything about him seems to betoken careless desolation; any one would suppose from his manner that he was playing at chuck-farthing with human happiness; that he was always on the heel of pastime; that he would giggle away the Great Charter, and decide by teetotum whether my Lords the Bishops should or should not retain their seats in the House of Lords. All this is the mere vanity of surprising, and making us believe that he can play with kingdoms as other men can with ninepins. Instead of this lofty nebula, this miracle of moral and intellectual felicities, he is nothing more than a sensible honest man, who means to do his duty to the Sovereign and to the country. Instead of being the ignorant man he pretends to be, before he meets the deputation of Tallow Chandlers in the morning, he sits up half the night with Thomas Young about milking and skimming, and then, though he has acquired knowledge enough to work off a whole vat of prime Leicester tallow, he pretends next morning not to know the difference between a dip and a mould. In the same way, when he has been employed in reading Acts of Parliament, he would persuade you that he has been reading, 'Cleghorn on the Beatitudes;' or 'Pickler on the Nine Difficult Points.' Neither can I allow to this Minister (however he may be irritated by the denial) the extreme merit of indifference to the consequences of his measures. I believe him to be conscientiously alive to the good or evil that he is doing, and that his caution has more than once arrested the gigantic projects of the Lycurgus (Lord John

Russell) of the Lower House. I am sorry to hurt any man's feelings, and to brush away the magnificent fabric of levity and gaiety he has reared; but I accuse our Minister of honour and diligence; I deny that he is careless or rash; he is nothing more than a man of good understanding and good principle, disguised in the eternal and somewhat wearisome affectation of a political Roué."

It would be unfair, however, not to quote the very favourable estimate of a recent writer, who, while admitting that Lord Melbourne cannot claim a place in the first rank of English statesmen; cannot bear comparison with such Ministers as Walpole, or Chatham, or Pitt, or Canning; that he had neither the authority nor the stately eloquence of Earl Grey, nor the parliamentary talents or administrative ability of Sir Robert Peel, asserts that he had qualities more rare and hardly less valuable than oratorical powers or administrative skill:—"With great knowledge of mankind he combined perfect sincerity and singleness of purpose. With high courage and a fine sense of political honour, he knew when to be firm, and when to give way. His tact and good humour carried many a point which a more earnest zeal would have lost. He was frank to a fault; but the bluntness which would have been offensive in a man less happily bred was so blended with wit, humour, and amenity in Lord Melbourne, that none of his sayings, however keen, were known to wound the feelings of any human being. He was a statesman without guile or any taint of official affectation, and he had a shrewd perception of human nature which is rarely found in an office-bred politician. His reading was various, and extended to subjects not often comprehended in literary pursuits. He was one of the best classical scholars of his day, and on one occasion translated off-hand, for Canning's information, a Greek epigram quoted by Lord Wellesley. Habitually indolent, he was supposed to be negligent of business. He was indeed careless of the routine of office; but in dealing with public matters his sagacity seldom failed to discriminate between matters which were important or practicable, and questions which it was premature or dangerous to touch."—'Edinburgh Review,' April, 1878, No. 302, p. 557.

VI.

Sir Robert Peel quickly completed the construction of his Cabinet. He himself assumed the office of First Lord of the Treasury; Lord Lyndhurst was made Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Wharncliffe, President of the Council; Earl of Haddington, First Lord of the Admiralty; Duke of Buckingham, Lord Privy Seal; Sir James Graham, Home Secretary; Earl of Aberdeen, Foreign Secretary; Lord Stanley, Colonial Secretary; Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control; Sir Henry Hardinge, Secretary at War; Earl of Ripon, President of the Board of Trade; Mr. Goulburn, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir E. Knatchbull, Paymaster-General; Lord Eliot, Chief Secretary for Ireland. The Duke of Wellington was a member of the Cabinet, but without office. Among the Ministers and Officials *not* in the Cabinet were Lord Lowther, Postmaster-General; Lord Granville Somerset, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; Mr. W. E. Gladstone, Vice-President of the Board of Trade;* Sir F. Pollock,

* In the light of Mr. Gladstone's great career as a Minister and Statesman, it is curious to read the following (written in 1849):—"Out of the Cabinet, the most notable man was, perhaps, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, who was Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and Master of the Mint. The character of his mind was not very clearly understood; and the prevalent doubt was whether he understood it himself; but enough was known of

Attorney-General; Sir W. Follett, Solicitor-General; Earl De Grey, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; and Sir E. Sugden, Irish Lord Chancellor. A contemporary supplies a vivid sketch of the circumstances attending the "swearing-in" of the new Ministry. The Court was then staying at Claremont, and the approaches to the palace, on the morning of Friday, September the 3rd, were thronged with excited crowds. It was not like "an ordinary change" of Ministry; it was a change of measures and of policy, as well as of men. The collapse of the Whigs was so absolute, as to be everywhere understood to mark the close of an "old order,"—of a certain period of the national history. A new order, a new period was beginning; and the multitude were watching, on that grey autumnal morning, not only for the passing Ministers and the coming, but for any and every incident which might be construed as an omen. The old Ministers drove up first—in plain clothes—were admitted to the royal presence, and delivered up their badges of office. Then, in full court costume, the new Ministers appeared; and it was noticed that "the first sunburst" broke forth as Sir Robert Peel drove in at the gates. He was very warmly cheered, as was also the Duke of Wellington; and both looked well pleased,—so people said. When the ex-Ministers had departed, Sir Robert Peel had audience of the Queen, to kiss hands on his appointment; and,

his seriousness, his thoughtfulness, and his conscientiousness, to cause him to be regarded with emphatic respect and hope, at a time when earnest men were to be prized above all others."—MARTINEAU, 'History of England,' ii. 478.

after him, the Duke of Wellington, and two or three of the more prominent members of the new Cabinet. The Queen and Prince Albert repaired to the corridor, and held a Privy Council, at which Lord Wharncliffe was declared President. The swearing-in of the new members was a rapid process; the whole affair, with luncheon, occupying only half an hour. By half-past two, the anxious young Queen was at liberty to make domestic acquaintance with her new household, and to think of the favourite friends who had initiated her into the ways and secrets of Constitutional Government. She was not long in discovering how satisfactory Sir Robert Peel could fill the place which Lord Melbourne had occupied as her private adviser, and how entirely he deserved her confidence. And if, as was generally said, her own political principles were those which are generally identified with Whiggism, she must soon have been conscious of a peculiar pleasure from the knowledge that it was upon these principles Sir Robert based his policy as a Conservative Minister, and that there was not one of his many great measures which Charles James Fox himself might not have initiated or supported.

Parliament re-assembled on the 16th of September. The first care of the Peel Administration was to provide for the existing deficiency, announcing at the same time that, next session, they would submit to the House the measures by which they proposed to restore order to the financial condition of the country, and to place the revenue on an equality with the expenditure. Lord John Russell professed to be indignant at this delay, provoking from the Minister the obvious retort that he

himself had failed to do in five years what he would not now allow a new Ministry five months to prepare and mature; but, while fully and deeply sensible of the distressed condition of the country, Sir Robert would attempt nothing until he had diligently studied the financial "situation."

On the 3rd of February, 1842, Parliament met again; and met under some excitement, as in the interval, the Duke of Buckingham, an Ultra-Protectionist, had resigned the office of Privy Seal, and it was, therefore, expected that the Premier had determined on a modification of the Corn Laws. This expectation was strengthened by a recommendation in the Speech from the Throne that Parliament should consider "the state of the laws affecting the importation of corn and other articles, the produce of foreign countries." And it was fulfilled on the 9th of February. The avenues to the House were on that day crowded with excited faces; and as soon as the doors were opened, the strangers' gallery was carried with a rush. At four o'clock the front ranks of a remarkable procession appeared on the scene. Six hundred Anti-Corn-Law delegates, whom the League had sent up from all parts of the country, marched down to the House, and when refused admission to the Lobby, lined the way in Palace Yard, and greeted the members as they passed with cries of, "Total Repeal!" "No Sliding Scale!" "Down with the Corn Laws!" This demonstration at an end, they marched back again up Parliament Street, and, at Privy Gardens, met the Premier in his carriage, going to the House. It was observed that he looked very grave;

and the gravity did not depart when he heard the shouts which demanded the repeal of the bread-tax. It did not relax; it could not relax; for he knew that he was not yet prepared to grant what was asked; that if he had educated himself up to a belief in the justice and wisdom of Free Trade, he had not yet educated his most trusted lieutenants or his party.

He rose to speak at about five o'clock. The House was very full, and a prince of the blood and many peers were present. The audience was one to stimulate and inspirit an orator; yet, we are told, that, on this occasion, his manner was nervous, uneasy, deficient in confidence. His speech was as clear and intelligible as usual, but not so forcibly reasoned as usual. It endeavoured to disconnect the existing depression and distress from the operation of the Corn Laws, and to ascribe them to other causes.* It expressed the speaker's conviction that it was of the highest importance to the welfare of all classes that the main sources of its corn supply should be derived from domestic agriculture. At the same time, the cogency was acknowledged of the objections to the existing law based upon its system of averages, of which speculators had made fraudulent use. These objections it was proposed to obviate by transferring the duty of ascertaining averages to the excise; by broadening the area from which returns were to be obtained; and, above all, by so reducing the duties as greatly to diminish the temptation to unfair and dishonest dealing. The intended reduction was explained

* Hansard, lx. 214 *et seq.*

at length; it was founded on the sliding-scale system, the duty decreasing as the average price of English corn rose. Thus, when home-grown wheat was at 50*s.* and under 51*s.* per quarter, the duty on foreign corn was to stand at 20*s.*; when home-grown wheat rose to 54*s.* the duty sank to 18*s.*; and so on, until, when home-grown wheat rose to 75*s.* and upwards, the duty sank to 1*s.*,—the object being, of course, to keep the price of wheat at a moderate level. "With reference to the probable remunerating price," said the Minister, "I should say that if the price of wheat in the country, allowing for its natural oscillations, could be limited to some such amount as between 54*s.* and 58*s.* that would be the thing to be desired. I do not believe that it is for the interest of the agriculturist that it should be higher; and on the other hand, I cannot say that I am able to see any great or permanent advantage to be derived from the diminution of the price of corn beyond the lowest amount I have named, if I look at the subject in connection with the general position of the country, the existing relations of landlord and tenant, the burden upon land, and the habits of the nation. I beg, however, altogether to disclaim mentioning this sum as a pivot or remunerating price, or any inference that the legislature can guarantee the continuation of that price; for I know that it is utterly beyond your power and a mere delusion to say, that, by any duty fixed or otherwise, you can guarantee a certain price to the producer."

Sir Robert's proposal met with opposition from two considerable parties. The fervent advocates of Free

Trade admitted that it was a relaxation, a concession; but that it was a concession made on the lines of Protection. The not less fervent advocates of Protection denounced it because it *was* a concession, and because they felt that it sounded the knell of the Corn Laws. The Opposition endeavoured to combine both sections against the Ministerial project; and Lord John Russell moved as an amendment, "that this House, considering the evils that have been caused by the present Corn Laws, and especially by the fluctuations of the graduated or sliding scale, is not prepared to adopt the measure of her Majesty's Government, which is founded upon the same principles, and is likely to be attended by similar results." After a sharp debate, 349 voted for the Ministry, and 226 against, giving them a majority of 123. Mr. Villiers, one of the earliest and most indefatigable of Free Trade champions, next submitted a motion against any corn duty whatever; but could rally only a minority of 90 against a formidable phalanx of 393. Further skirmishing followed; but Sir Robert was too good a general, and at the head of too loyal a following, to be worsted in any encounter, and the Bill passed through both Houses triumphantly to become law on the 29th of April.

Meanwhile, Sir Robert had firmly established his reputation as a financier by the introduction of a fiscal policy of extraordinary breadth and boldness. He found himself called upon to lift the nation out of a slough of debt and discredit. The deficit in the last year had reached £2,334,559; for 1843, it would not be less than £2,570,000; in six years it amounted to

the formidable total of £10,072,638. A renewal of the old funding and borrowing system was impossible; and it was well understood that indirect taxation had reached its limit. Yet the national indebtedness must be remedied, and provision made for meeting such extra expenditure as the Chinese opium war and the Afghanistan calamity might involve. On the 11th of March the Minister unfolded the great scheme by which he proposed to retrieve the past, and give a new impulse to the enterprise of the country. His speech was worthy of the occasion, not only in its perspicuous eloquence and luminous simplicity, but in its tone of earnest and deeply-felt responsibility. After a straightforward statement of the embarrassments which the Government and the nation were called upon to face, and an exposition of the measures by which he intended to dispose of them, he said*: —

"I have performed, on the part of her Majesty's Government, my duty. I have proposed, with the full weight and authority of the Government, that which I believe to be conducive to the public welfare. I now devolve upon you the duty, which properly belongs to you, of maturely considering, and finally deciding upon, the adoption or rejection of the measures I propose. We live in an important era of human affairs. There may be a natural tendency to overrate the magnitude of the crisis in which we live, or those particular events with which we are ourselves conversant; but I think it is impossible to deny that the period in which our lot

* Hansard, lxi.

and the lot of our fathers has been cast—the period which has elapsed since the first outbreak of the first French Revolution—has been one of the most memorable periods that the history of the world will afford. The course which England has pursued during that period will attract for ages to come the contemplation, and, I trust, the animation, of posterity. . . . I am now addressing you after the declaration of peace for twenty-five years. I am now exhibiting to you the financial difficulties and embarrassments in which you are placed; and my confident hope and belief is, that following the example of those who preceded you, you will look those difficulties in the face, and not refuse to make similar sacrifices to those which your fathers made for the purpose of upholding public credit. You will bear in mind that this is no casual and occasional difficulty. You will bear in mind that there are indications among all the upper classes of society of increased comfort and enjoyment—of increased prosperity and wealth, and that, concurrently with these indications, there exists a mighty evil which has been growing up for the last seven years, and which you are now called upon to meet. If you have, as I believe you have, the fortitude and constancy of which your forefathers have set the example, you will not consent with folded arms to view the annual growth of this mighty evil. You will not reconcile it to your consciences to hope for relief from diminished taxation. You will not adopt the miserable expedient of adding, during peace, and in the midst of those indications of wealth and of increas- prosperity, to the burdens which posterity will be called

upon to bear. You will not permit this evil to gain such gigantic growth as ultimately to place it far beyond your power to check or control. If you do permit this evil to continue, you must expect the severe but just judgment of a reflecting and retrospective posterity. Your conduct will be contrasted with the conduct of your fathers, under difficulties infinitely less pressing than theirs. Your conduct will be contrasted with that of your fathers, who, with a mutiny at the Nore, a rebellion in Ireland, and disaster abroad, yet submitted with buoyant vigour and universal applause (with the funds as low as 52) to a property tax of 10 per cent. I believe that you will not subject yourselves to an injurious or unworthy contrast. It is my firm belief that you will feel the necessity of preserving inviolate the public credit—that you will not throw away the means of maintaining the public credit by reducing in the most legitimate manner the burden of the public debt. My confident hope and belief is that now, when I devolve the responsibility upon you, you will prove yourselves worthy of your mission—of your mission as the representatives of a mighty people; and that you will not tarnish the fame which it is your duty to cherish as the most glorious inheritance—that you will not impair the character for fortitude, for good faith, which, in proportion as the empire of opinion supersedes and predominates over the empire of physical force, constitutes for every people, but above all for the people of England,—I speak of reputation and character,—the main instrument by which a powerful people can repel hostile aggressions, and maintain extended empire."

The propositions submitted by the Minister were: an Income Tax, not to exceed sevenpence in the pound, or nearly three per cent, for a limited period. Second, from this tax all incomes below £160 were to be exempted. Third, Ireland was also to be exempted, as it had no machinery for the collection of the duty, but an equivalent tax was to be found in an increased charge on spirits. And, fourth, the 4*s*. duty on the export of coal, hitherto partial, was to be applied to all exportation of that article.

The Minister calculated that the revenue from these new sources would amount to £4,380,000. After the deficit had been supplied, what was to be done with the surplus? Sir Robert's conception of its application was that of a statesman. Out of 1200 articles then subject to Customs duties, 750 were to be reduced. The first principle was, he said, to remove prohibition; and the next, to reduce duties on the raw material of manufactures to 5 per cent, or less. On articles partially manufactured the duty henceforth would never exceed 12 per cent; nor, on articles wholly manufactured, 20 per cent. The new Tariff exhibited the Minister's well-known mastery of details, and proved to have been drawn up in a spirit of great liberality towards the consumer. The duties levied on a great number of minor articles, coming principally under the head of drugs and dye-wools, were abandoned; on many others, they were greatly reduced. The ultra-Tory saw with alarm that the prohibitory duties were no longer to be maintained upon live cattle, sheep, and swine, on salted and dried meats, on butter, eggs, cheese, and lard. But,

perhaps, his alarm was greater at the sentiments which the Minister enunciated in supporting his proposed reductions. "I believe," he said, and the ghost of Eldon might almost have been heard to heave a sigh at the avowal, "that, on the general principle of free trade, there is now no great difference of opinion; and that all agree in the general rule that "we should purchase in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest." It is true he excepted from the application of this principle the sugar duties and the corn-laws; but a little reflection suggested to the old Tories that these exceptions must inevitably give way under any sudden pressure. A system of Protection could be maintained, or a system of Free Trade could be maintained; but a system of Protection, into which Free Trade doctrines had been introduced, was obviously incapable of protracted defence. Yet what could the malcontents do? The Conservative Party owed its existence to Sir Robert Peel; had been led to victory by Sir Robert Peel; and without Sir Robert Peel could not hold its ground for a single session. They might secretly murmur; they might tremble at the thought of coming disasters; but they were forced to submit. As for the country at large, it may have accepted the income tax with some reluctance, but it did not fail to see that it was the pivot on which the Minister's scheme revolved; and that the reduction of prices which would follow the reduction of duties would more than compensate the consumer for the slight additional burden of taxation.

The third reading of the Income Tax Bill in the Commons was carried, on the 30th of May, by a majority

of 130; in the Lords, by a majority of 71. This triumph brought with it, of course, the triumph of the new Tariff, which passed the House of Commons on the 28th of June. In the Upper House, Lord Stanhope predicted that it would be fatal to the fame and power of the Minister who brought it forward; but could summon to his side only eight peers. The first division, on the 8th of July, showed a majority of 52 to 9. It is needless to say that Lord Stanhope's prophecy has not been fulfilled. The policy which Sir Robert Peel so boldly initiated has never been repudiated. On the contrary, it has been carried to its farthest possible goal by Sir Robert Peel's able and skilful lieutenant, Mr. Gladstone; and no considerable party, either in the House or the country, shows any disposition to reverse it. The session of 1842 would have been sufficiently distinguished had it borne no other legislative fruit than these great measures. But it also produced a Poor Law Renewal Act and a Copyright Act. A still more beneficial effort of legislation was Lord Ashley's (now the Earl of Shaftesbury) Act for regulating the employment of women and children in mines and collieries. It deserves special notice as the first attempt made by the legislature at the improvement of the social condition of the labouring classes.

In 1843 the work of Parliament began with a discussion on Lord Howick's motion for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the causes of the distress still existing in the country. The motion was rejected by 301 to 191; but the debate elicited some remarkable acknowledgments from Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone,

and Sir James Graham. They admitted without reservation the general principles of Free-trade, while arguing for a continuance of protection to agriculture, on the ground of the many important interests which were connected with it. It was abundantly clear that they sympathised with the advocates of Free-trade, to the full extent even of the opinions of Messrs. Cobden and Bright, and differed from them only, or chiefly, on the question when and how it should be developed. Sir Robert Peel was determined to move cautiously; to make sure of his ground as he advanced; and to accustom all classes to the changes that were impending. A personal episode in the debate on Lord Horwick's motion must not be omitted. On the 21st of January, Mr. Drummond, Sir Robert Peel's confidential secretary and friend, was fired at and mortally wounded on his way from Charing Cross to Whitehall, by a man named McNaughten, whose insanity was afterwards fully ascertained. It was known that the assassin had mistaken his victim for the Premier, on whose mind, therefore, the incident naturally made a deep impression. In the course of debate, the great Free-trade Apostle, Mr. Cobden, repeating an expression he had already used out-of-doors, asserted that he held the Prime Minister "individually responsible" for what might happen. Sir Robert, profoundly hurt, and much excited, sprang to his feet, and amid vehement Ministerial cheers, seized upon the phrase, which he denounced as holding him up as a mark for the pistol of the assassin. Mr. Cobden vainly endeavoured to disavow the interpretation, and to reject an imputation which was insulting to his character.

The House would not hear him. Before the conclusion of the debate, however, he found his opportunity; and the explanation he offered was accepted by Sir Robert.

A Factory Bill was the principal legislative measure of the session. As originally drawn, it embodied a Government scheme of education for the working classes; but this was met with so much ungenerous hostility by the Dissenters that the Government withdrew it. The clauses regulating the employment of women and children in factories proposed to reduce the working day to twelve hours, Lord Ashley attempted to limit it to ten hours, but failed.

The year 1843 added no great measures to the Statute Book, and was illustrated by no important financial reforms. Yet it greatly strengthened the prestige and reputation of the Peel Administration, since it recorded the collapse of the Irish agitation. Between O'Connell and Sir Robert Peel no truce was possible from the first. The Minister was neither to be cajoled nor bullied. He needed no Irish support; he would accept of no compromise; he would make no conditions. The agitator, driven to the alternative of battle or surrender, chose the former, and set on foot an association for obtaining a repeal of the Act of Union, which spread its ramifications over all Ireland. That he ever supposed it possible to obtain repeal we do not believe. More probably he hoped to terrify England into some additional concession, the extent of which, perhaps, he had not very clearly defined even to himself. He conducted his agitation, however, with consummate ability, and with a wonderful control over the excitable Irish peasantry,

whom he continually stimulated to the verge of rebellion, without suffering them to take the fatal and irrevocable leap. It must be owned that Sir Robert Peel met him with equal ability, carefully refraining from any exercise of power which could justify a revolutionary movement on the part of the Irish people, and patiently biding his time to strike a blow at the agitation which should effectually check it.

One of its most alarming features was the "monster meetings" which O'Connell assembled, generally on some scene of historic or legendary interest, such as the Hill of Tara and the Field of Clontarf; for the effect of these was to influence the national imagination, and induce in the mind of the people a conviction of their irresistible strength, which was not less erroneous than their belief in the tyrannical character of the English Government. It was always to be feared that any exciting language and "patriotic" ballads might urge the people to some sudden outbreak, which not even O'Connell and the Roman Catholic priests could prevent. Men, therefore, contemplated in amazement the apathy with which Sir Robert Peel and his Cabinet apparently viewed these proceedings. They did not yet understand the great Minister's character; the power that was always latent in him, and the patience with which he waited for his opportunity.

At length "the uncrowned king," as O'Connell's flatterers called him, summoned a "monster meeting" for the 8th of October, to be held at Clontarf, where the native Irish had once gained a victory over the Danes. It was intended as a supreme demonstration, and the

most assiduous preparations were made to ensure its success. Sir Robert saw that the time had come for striking, and on the 7th of October, the day before the meeting, a proclamation from the Lord-Lieutenant in Council was suddenly issued, prohibiting the assemblage, and denouncing it as the work of factious and seditious men. The blow was effectual. O'Connell was not prepared to risk a collision with the Government, knowing there could be but one result. He therefore issued placards countermanding the meeting, and a large number of Repealers were stationed on the approaches to Clontarf to turn back all comers. Early next morning the main strength of the Dublin garrison was so skilfully dispersed on the field, that all who arrived found themselves compelled to "move on" between a double line of soldiers. There were no hustings, for they had been removed in the night, and there was no Daniel O'Connell. But in his place stood Thomas Steele, "Head Pacificator on Ireland," waving a green bough as an emblem of peace, and shouting frantically, "Home, home, home!"*

O'Connell now declared that this was to have been the last meeting, and that the act of the Government in forbidding it was base and imbecile. The Government had good reason to know, however, that the agitator would not and could not have stopped at the Clontarf demonstration. In truth, he had raised a monster whom he found it, as Frankensteins always do, exceedingly difficult to manage. And probably he had as much reason to be grateful, as his deluded followers had, for the

* 'Annual Register,' 1843, p. 234; Martineau, ii. 568.

firmness which checked him and them before disorder had ripened into insurrection. In England the public were highly gratified by the vigour and prudence of the Government; and their gratification was not diminished when the first blow was followed up by another, and a still more effectual one. On the 14th of October, Mr. O'Connell, and eight of his coadjutors, including his son, Mr. John O'Connell, were arrested, and held to bail, on charges of conspiracy, sedition, and unlawful assembling. The bubble was now pricked completely, and burst. The "uncrowned King" who had so long indulged in the most violent demonstrations and tickled the ears of an ignorant peasantry by the most blatant rhetoric, now roared as gently as any sucking dove. He entreated the people to keep the peace, to obey the laws; he declared that if it gave offence he would never more use the once favourite epithet of "Saxon." It is the most laughable and yet painful *fiasco* in history—this humiliation of the great agitator. No wonder that thenceforth his health began to fail, for he could not but be aware of the contemptuous judgment history would pass upon his conduct.

We have no space to follow up the details of the law proceedings that followed. After a trial of extraordinary duration, which the accused had protracted by adopting every expedient that legal ingenuity could suggest, O'Connell and his companions were found guilty on all or some of the terms of the indictment (February 12th, 1844), sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and fines, and required to give securities for keeping the peace. Mr. O'Connell's fine was £2000; his term of

imprisonment, twelve months; after which he was to be bound for £5000, with two sureties of £2500 each for some years. No sentence could be more lenient, but in its lenity lay its sting. Evidently the Government were determined not to accord him the honour even of a cheap martyrdom. Proceedings were taken to obtain a reversal of the sentence on the ground of some informality of procedure, and the appeal of the prisoners went before the Lords, who referred it to the twelve judges. All the judges declared six of the eleven counts to be bad or informal. Seven were of opinion, nevertheless, that the judgment and sentence must stand, because the Irish judges must know best upon how much of the verdict they based their sentence, and there was certainly enough to justify that sentence. It remained for the House to decide between the majority and the minority. Wisely the Peers left the decision to the Law Lords, three of whom, Lords Denman, Cottenham, and Campbell pronounced for a reversal of the judgment, against Lord Brougham, who was in favour of affirming it.* Thus O'Connell escaped the prison he had deserved; and it was well that it should be so. It deprived him of all excuse for enlarging on the injustice of the Saxon. He had appealed to the Imperial Parliament, and it was the Imperial Parliament that had set him free. He had no grievance to inspire his eloquence. Coals of fire had been heaped upon his head by the Legislature he had

* Brougham was so incensed at this decision that he declared it "had gone forth without authority, and would return without respect."—HANSARD, lxxxi. 459.

defied and derided. His defeat was absolute, and he never again grew formidable. He had played against Peel with all his finest subtlety and ingenuity, and Peel had won; not by subtlety and ingenuity like his own, but by patience, coolness, and courage.*

The session of 1844 was a busy one. It showed in various ways that the labours of Cobden and Bright were beginning to bear fruit; it indicated a further advance towards Free-trade on the part of Peel and his most trusted colleagues; it witnessed the success of another Factory Bill, by which the hours of work for women and children underwent a further limitation; it was distinguished by the conversion of the 3½ per cent. public stocks to 3 per cent.; it produced a remission of the duties on various articles of consumption; and it affected, by means of the Bank Charter Act, a complete reorganisation of the Bank of England. Railway legislation was also rendered necessary by the rapid extension of the railway system. A Bill introduced by Mr. Gladstone compelled the railway companies to make better provision for their third-class passengers, and remedied many evils hitherto deemed inseparable from

* "Mr. O'Connell survived his defeat about three years, but only as a sort of melancholy and wandering ghost of his former self. After this, to face Sir Robert Peel in the British House of Commons must have been worse than death to one who, to great faults of character, unquestionably joined great talents, vast energy, and a love of country which, though he failed miserably at last in his designs, must not be denied him. From their first entrance into public life he had been the bitter antagonist of Peel, but in Sir Robert he met an adversary superior to himself both in knowledge of mankind and command of temper."—DOUBLEDAY, 'Life of Peel,' ii. 367.

railway management. The "Rebecca riots" in Wales, induced by the exorbitant tolls levied for the maintenance of the turnpike roads, called forth a measure for the entire reform of the whole system of Welsh turnpike trusts. Incidentally we may notice the outburst of public feeling, not less unjust and ill-founded than such outbursts usually are, provoked by the charge against Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, of having opened the letters of Mazzini, the Italian revolutionist, and others, in their transit through the Post-office. The report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the matter satisfied all reasonable people that a power which it is necessary every Government should possess, had been exercised with discretion, and the ferment quickly subsided.

The prosperity of the country, and the swift increase of its commercial enterprise, enabled the Minister to meet Parliament in February, 1845, with the fullest confidence. During the recess, however, his Government had lost one of its ablest and most earnest members, owing to the resignation of Mr. Gladstone, who, as President of the Board of Trade, had taken an active part in working out, explaining, and supporting Sir Robert's financial reforms. Soon after the opening of the session it was found that an extreme conscientiousness had led him to deprive the country of services which it had learned to value. In an early work of his on Church and State, the work so sharply criticised by Macaulay in a well-known essay, he had expressed opinions which did not agree with the course Sir Robert Peel had resolved upon taking in reference to the endow-

ment of the Roman Catholic College at Maynooth. He no longer held those opinions; but he had persuaded himself that if in office he defended a measure which he had previously condemned, his change of view might be ascribed to interested motives. Very general regret was felt at what was considered the action of an unnecessarily fastidious conscience. Mr. Gladstone's explanation called up Sir Robert Peel, who, after paying a high compliment to his late colleague, announced that he intended to propose a liberal increase of the Maynooth College vote, unaccompanied by any regulation with respect to the doctrine, discipline, and management of the college, which could diminish the grace and favour of the grant. This proposal was afterwards carried into effect, much to the alarm and indignation of the ultra-Protestant party; and was followed by another sagacious and enlightened measure, the establishment in Ireland of the "Queen's Colleges," in which no definite religious instruction is imparted, so that under their ample roof students of all religious belief may meet in peace. The great interest of the session centred, however, in the Minister's Budget, which was explained to a crowded House in a speech of three hours and a quarter's duration. It was built up on a continuance of the income-tax for a second period of three years, so as to provide the means for another large remission of taxation. A great reduction of the sugar duties; the abolition of the duty on exported coal; the abolition of the duties on the raw material of silk, hemp, flax, certain yarns, furniture woods, animal and vegetable manures, and various other articles, 430 in number; and the remission

of the auction and glass duties, were among the reforms which lent a new impulse to the commercial and manufacturing industry of the empire. "The total immediate loss," said Sir Robert, in concluding his speech, "which the revenue will sustain from the repeal of the duty on all the articles on which I propose a remission of taxation will be £3,338,000, which will nearly absorb the surplus of £3,400,000, on which I have calculated. I do not deny that the financial scheme which I have just explained to the committee is a bold experiment; but, responsible as I am to Parliament for its success, I am not afraid of making it. I now propose to the committee to continue the income-tax for a further limited period of three years, because I have a confident expectation that the reduction in the price of articles of great importance which will follow this proposed remission of taxation will be, if not a complete, yet a great compensation for its burden. I will not say that it may not be wise to give a longer time than three years for testing this experiment. I think, however, that Parliament ought to have a control over such a tax. I hope that so great a source of revenue will not be dried up before the expiration of three years; but at the end of that time, such is my confidence in the elasticity of the country, I think you will be able to dispense with the tax if you think proper. I recommend this plan with a deliberate conviction that your sanction of it will conduce to the extension of industry and the encouragement of enterprise; so that all classes, whether agricultural, manufacturing, commercial, or parties not engaged in any particular branch of industry, will either directly or indirectly be benefited by it."

The Budget underwent, of course, the usual ordeal of amateur criticism. Mr. Roebuck moved an amendmend exempting "professions, trades, and offices" from the operation of the income tax, but was defeated by a majority of 208 (263 against 55). All our financiers have admitted the unequal incidence of this tax, but none have appeared able to remedy it. Other attacks were similarly unsuccessful. The most important was directed against the difference in the duties levied on foreign and colonial sugars, the latter being maintained at a lower figure than the former for the protection of the West Indian planters. Free trade was warmly advocated by Milner Gibson, Villiers, Cobden, and Bright; the Ministerial plan not less warmly supported by Gladstone, Goulburn, and Cardwell. On a division Mr. Milner Gibson mustered only 84 votes against the 217 of the Government.

After the Budget had been steered safely into port, the Free Trade question was brought directly before the House, on the 18th of March, by Mr. Cobden, who moved the appointment of a select committee "to inquire into the causes and extent of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effect of legislative protection upon the interests of landowners, tenant farmers, and farm labourers." The Ministry were bound to resist the motion, but Mr. Sydney Herbert (afterwards Lord Herbert of Lea), in doing so, let fall admissions which gave but a small degree of comfort to the champions of the agricultural interest. They were specially indignant at his assertion that "it would be distasteful to the agriculturists to come whining to Parliament

at every period of temporary distress." It was apparent to Cobden and Bright, and the other Free Trade Leaders, that there no longer existed any difference of principle between them and the Government.* It had become simply a question of prudence—that is, of time. But neither they nor the country had any idea that the solution of the problem was so near at hand as it proved to be.

The discussion was renewed from the Protectionist point of view, a week or two later, by Mr. Miles, who submitted several suggestions for the relief of the distress inflicted on the agricultural interest by, as he contended, the legislation of the Government. That distress appeared to be represented, so far as he could be understood, by the cheapness of meat and the abundance of corn. And because the country at large was basking in the sunshine of prosperity, he declared that the agriculturists had no confidence in the Ministry. He concluded by moving that in the opinion of the House, "in the application of surplus revenue towards relieving the burden of the country by reduction or remission of taxation, due regard should be had to the necessity of affording relief to the agricultural interests." In the debate that followed, a remarkable speech was made by Mr. Disraeli, the leader of the "Young England" party, that is, of a small section of clever young men,

* On this point Sir Robert Peel's own admission is sufficient;—"In the interval between the passing of the Corn Bill in 1842, and the close of the session of 1845, the opinions I had previously entertained on the subject of protection to agriculture had undergone a great change."—'Memoirs,' ii. 101.

who had tried the experiment of importing sentiment into politics, and applying the ideas of mediævalism to the questions of the day. Mr. Disraeli had already acquired a position in the House by his remarkable debating power and his epigrammatic fertility, and had won the suffrages of the literary world by several novels of indisputable ability and freshness. On this occasion he delivered a Philippic against the Government, which exceeded in bitterness any of his former efforts. After saying that Sir Robert Peel had sent down his valet (Mr. Sydney Herbert) to say, in the genteelest manner, "We can have no whining here," he continued :—"Protection appears to be in about the same condition that Protestantism was in 1828. The country will draw its moral. For my part, if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the honourable member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), than by one who, through skilful parliamentary manœuvres, has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and of a great party. For myself I care not what may be the result. Dissolve, if you please, the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative government is an organized hypocrisy." Such a declaration as this was rightly regarded as an indication that the extreme Protectionists had lost all confidence in the Peel Ministry, and saw plainly that the tendency of their measures was in a Free Trade direction.

The next episode originated in a motion by Mr. Ward, diametrically opposed in spirit and intention to Mr. Miles's agricultural jeremiad. He wanted an inquiry into the burdens and exemptions of the landed interest on the ground that it enjoyed unfair advantages. The Government, however, showed him no more favour than it had shown to Mr. Miles; and his motion was rejected by 182 to 109. On the 10th of June, Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion for the abolition of all duties on corn. It was dismissed by 254 to 122; but Sir James Graham, in the course of debate, emphatically expressed his conviction that the prosperity of the landed interest could not be separated from that of any other interest; and that the national welfare demanded a gradual abandonment of protection. Lord John Russell submitted to the House a series of resolutions which embodied a kind of political manifesto. They failed to elicit any national enthusiasm, though they advocated the abolition of all protective duties; a revision of the laws affecting parochial settlements; a systematic plan of colonization; and a further extension of religious and moral education.* In supporting them, Lord John declared that he could no longer recommend the fixed duty of 8*s.* on corn, which he had proposed in 1841. He thought that no one would propose a lower duty than 4*s.*; for himself, he should propose one of 4*s.*, 5*s.*, or 6*s.* The Anti-corn Law League rejoiced exceedingly; for it felt that the battle had been won. Its long series of meetings, lectures, and pamphlets had not missed the

* Molesworth, ii. 218.

mark. It was evident that the Whig leader, on very slight pressure, would give up his 4*s.* duty as he had given up his 8*s.* duty; that, in a word, he was prepared to compete with Sir Robert Peel, at the earliest opportunity, for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The Royal Speech on the prorogation of Parliament (August the 9th) was the "last thoroughly cheerful speech," remarks a contemporary historian,* which the nation was to enjoy for some time. It enumerated, among the successful labours of a busy session, Irish Education, British Railways, fiscal reforms, the amendment of the Poor Law of Scotland, the promotion of the Drainage of Land and Enclosure of Commons, and the extension of the provisions of the Bank Act of 1844, with suitable modifications, to the Banks of Scotland and Ireland. "The prevailing impression of those who watched the course of parliamentary affairs was, that the disintegration of parties was proceeding more and more rapidly as the commercial element rose above the agricultural; and that from this change there could be no rest or pause till the agricultural interest had obtained that freedom, and consequent stimulus and intelligence, which had caused the expansion of interests that were erroneously considered to be antagonistic." There were no signs of weakness, however, in the Minister's position. The Protectionist Irreconcilables and the Young England guerillas were as powerless to shake it as the Whig line of battle. The commercial and manufacturing classes, and, indeed, the great body of the people, confided

* Martineau, ii. 673.

in the Minister's sagacity, his plenitude of resource, and his administrative capacity. The nation felt that it was well governed. It admired the skill with which the Minister's measures were prepared, and the firmness with which they were conducted through the legislature. It was conscious that every session the work of reform was advancing; that every session saw some abuse rooted up, some grievance redressed, some improvement effected in the social and moral condition of the masses. And it gave its heartiest support to the statesman, who, at the cost of an occasional sacrifice of early convictions and personal associations, was steadfastly and loyally accomplishing a work so noble.

"Meantime, it had begun to rain." Well; in this was nothing wonderful. How could bad weather affect one of the strongest Governments England had ever seen? Unfortunately this proved to be no ordinary rain, no ordinary bad weather, either in its duration or its consequences. In some parts of the country summer came not, nor autumn; from the beginning of June until the spring of 1846 the sun was scarcely seen. In due time it became certain that the corn harvest would be sadly deficient, and that to supply the deficiency large quantities of foreign wheat must be imported. To the champions of Free-trade it seemed as if Providence were fighting on their side. By-and-by more serious intelligence than even the poorness of the corn harvest disturbed the thoughts of Ministers. "First, a market-gardener here and there, a farmer, an Irish cottier, saw a brown spot appear on the margin of the leaf of the potato, and did not remember ever to

have seen such a thing before. The brown spot grew black and spread, and covered the stalk, till a whole potato-field looked as if a scorching wind had passed over it, yet, perhaps, the roots might appear to be in a good state; and one man would let the plants alone, while another would mow off the tops, and wait to see what happened. The stealthy rain had, by some means yet as mysterious as ever, generated some minute plague —of what nature nobody yet knows, if, indeed, it is certain that the rain was the instrument,—a plague so minute that no microscope has yet convicted it, yet so powerful that it was soon to overthrow Governments, and derange commerce, and affect for all time the political fate of England, and settle the question of the regeneration or the destruction of Ireland. The minute plague spread and spread till it blackened thousands of acres, and destroyed the food of millions of men." Sir Robert Peel, who knew something of Ireland, and whose intuitive perceptions were of the rarest order, recognized at once that his Ministry were called upon to face the dangers and difficulties of an Irish potato famine. It was a great advantage that he saw and appreciated the full extent of the emergency, for this was the primary condition of successfully grappling with it. He understood that the calamity against which he and his colleagues were called upon to guard was little less than the starvation of a people; and that he early foresaw the character of the measures to be adopted, we learn from a letter which he addressed, on the 13th of October, to Sir James Graham: "I have no confidence in such remedies as the prohibition of exports or the stoppage

of the distilleries. The removal of impediments to imports is the only effectual remedy."* And that Sir James Graham agreed with his chief we learn from a letter dated the 17th of October:† "The suspension of the existing Corn Law on the avowed admission that its maintenance aggravates the evil of scarcity, and that its remission is the surest mode of restoring plenty, would render its re-enactment a future operation quite impracticable; yet, if the evil be as urgent as I fear it will be, to this suspension we shall be driven." Nature had condemned the Corn Laws; and Sir Robert found himself driven to contemplate their repeal. He was as well aware as his colleague that, once repealed, they could not be re-enacted; that their repeal or suspension was in itself an admission of their injustice. To Lord Heytesbury, the Irish Viceroy, he wrote on the 15th:—"We must consider whether it is possible by legislation, or by the exercise of prerogative, to apply a remedy to the great evil with which we are threatened. The application of such remedy involves considerations of the utmost magnitude. The remedy is the removal of all impediments to the import of all kinds of human food—that is, the total and absolute repeal for ever of all duties on all articles of subsistence. I believe that practically there would be no alternative. To remit the duty on Indian corn expressly for the purpose of averting famine would make it very invidious to retain a duty on other species of corn more generally applicable to the food of man. You might remit nominally for one year;

* Sir Robert Peel, 'Memoirs,' ii. 114.

† *Ibid.* ii. 117.

but who will re-establish the Corn Laws once abrogated, though from a casual and temporary pressure? I have good ground, therefore, for stating that the application of a temporary remedy to a temporary evil does, in this particular case, involve considerations of the utmost and most lasting importance."

Holding these views, and receiving every day information which showed the terrible character of the crisis, Sir Robert summoned a meeting of the Cabinet for Friday, the 31st of October. It was soon apparent that grave differences of opinion existed, both as to the necessity for adopting any extraordinary measures, and as to the nature of the measures, if any, which would be advisable. A second Cabinet Council was held on the 6th of November, by which time it had been ascertained beyond a doubt, "that famine, and, consequently, pestilence, were immediately imminent, unless the Government should without hesitation or delay take the most prompt measures to provide food for the people, and to organise means for the distribution of such food throughout the land." Sir Robert, accordingly, proposed to issue an Order in Council suspending the operation of the Corn Laws, to call Parliament together on the 27th, to ask for indemnity and for a sanction of the Order by law, and to intimate to Parliament the intention of the Government, immediately after the recess, to submit a modification of the existing statutes. He was supported, however, by only three of his colleagues, the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. At first, Sir Robert appears to have thought of resigning; but after mature reflection, considering

that the objections of many might be removed by additional information, and that the dissolution of a Government in such circumstances must greatly excite the public mind, he resolved to retain office until an opportunity arose for reconsidering the whole subject.*

But an unexpected external agent now moved in the troubled waters. Lord John Russell at this time was on a visit to Edinburgh, whence he observed with interest the meetings of the Cabinet, and, as a veteran politician, shrewdly conjectured the subject of their deliberation. When Ministers dispersed without summoning Parliament, he concluded that they had decided on a policy of inaction. The moment had come, he thought, for striking a blow at the Government. And without consulting his party, and with no "false delicacy" for his embarrassed opponents, he embodied his view of the situation in that celebrated "Edinburgh letter," which, on the 28th of November, he addressed to his constituents, the citizens of London.† In this he said, that, the Queen's Ministers having met and separated without affording the country any promise of seasonable relief, it became the duty of the Queen's subjects to consider how calamities of no ordinary magnitude could be best averted, or at all events mitigated.

"Two evils," said Lord John Russell, "require your consideration. One of these is the disease in the potatoes, affecting very seriously parts of England and Scotland, and committing fearful ravages in Ireland. . .

* Sir Robert Peel, 'Memoirs,' ii. 159.

† Lord Beaconsfield, 'Lord George Bentinck: a Political Biography,' p. 19.

Another, under which we are suffering, is the fruit of Ministerial counsel and Parliamentary law. It is the direct consequence of an Act of Parliament passed three years ago, on the recommendation of the present advisers of the Crown. By this law, grain of all kinds has been made subject to very high duties on importation. These duties are so contrived that the worse the quality of the corn, the higher is the duty; so that when good wheat rises to 70*s.* a quarter, the average price of all wheat is 57*s.* or 58*s.*, and the duty 15*s.* or 14*s.* a quarter. Thus the corn barometer points to fair, while the ship is bending under a storm.

"This defect was pointed out many years ago by writers on the Corn Laws, and was urged upon the attention of the House of Commons when the present Act was under consideration.

"But I confess that on the general subject my views have in the course of twenty years undergone a great alteration.* I used to be of opinion that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy; but

* Lord Dalling, in his 'Historical Sketch of Sir Robert Peel,' very truly observes (p. 135):—"Lord John Russell and other leading members of the Whig party, who had been supporters of a Corn Law, underwent, year by year, a modification in their former opinions, and were arriving in 1845 at the determination of abandoning them. Sir Robert Peel had been undergoing precisely the same influences, and was arriving precisely at the same conclusions. The country gentlemen amongst the Whigs had quite as much cause to reproach their leader for an alteration in his views, as the country gentlemen of the Tories had a right to reproach others. But neither the one statesman nor the other had as yet gone so far as to make common cause with Mr. Villiers and Mr. Cobden. An important and alarming incident hastened the decision of both. That incident was the failure of the potatoe crop."

observation and experience have convinced me that we ought to abstain from all interference with the supply of food. Neither a Government nor a Legislature can ever regulate the corn market with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce."

After enumerating the various efforts he had made to secure a compromise, Lord John Russell concluded:—

"Let us, then, unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.

"But if this end is to be achieved, it must be gained by the unequivocal expression of the public voice. It is not to be denied that many elections for cities and towns in 1841, and some in 1845, appear to favour the assertion that Free Trade is not popular with the great mass of the community. The Government appear to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn Law. Let the people by petition, by address, by remonstrance, afford them the excuse they seek. Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provisions which caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest; but let the removal of restrictions on the admission of the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required, in plain terms, as useful to all great interests, and indispensable to the progress of the nation."

We have seen that Sir Robert Peel, in his communications with his colleague, had anticipated the Whig leader's proposal. But while it had no influence upon the advice he offered, or on the conduct he adopted, it became a factor in his calculations which could not be overlooked. Unquestionably, it assisted him in bringing round his Cabinet to his own views. So far as Lord John himself was concerned, his Manifesto failed in its effect. It came too late to elicit any hearty response from the nation. It had too clearly the character of a "bid" for office and popularity; and its undignified allusions to Sir Robert Peel were naturally regarded as the splenetic ebullitions of a disappointed politician. Had Lord John Russell previously stood forward as the advocate of Free Trade, his position at this juncture would have been glorious and triumphant. Or had he been a Conservative leader, converted, like his rival, by the logic of events, he would have been cordially trusted. The difference between his action and that of the Minister is sharply emphasized by Lord Dalling:—"The first might gain office by declaring that the moment was come for putting Protection altogether on one side; the other could only lose it."

The Cabinet reassembled on Tuesday, the 25th of November, and the great question immediately came up for settlement. After anxious deliberations, it appeared that Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch remained firm in opposing the policy recommended by the premier. The Duke of Wellington did not conceal his dislike of it, but with his usual practical sagacity he saw that it had become indispensable; and subordi-

nating his own prejudices, as he had always done, to the requirements of the public welfare, he promised to support it. Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch then intimated their intention of retiring from office. "All the other members of the Government," writes Sir Robert Peel, "were prepared to support the repeal of the Corn Laws, and I felt assured of the cordial support of all, even of those who had hesitated in the first instance, from the moment that they consented to waive their objections. I could not, however, conceal from myself that the assent given by many was a reluctant one; that it was founded rather on a conviction (a perfectly pure and conscientious conviction) of the public evil that must arise from the dissolution of the Government at such a time and from such a cause, than on the deliberate approval of the particular course which I urged upon their adoption." Under these circumstances, and taking into consideration the threatened resignation of influential Ministers, Sir Robert thought it very doubtful whether he could conduct his intended policy to a successful issue. The result was, that on the 5th of December he tendered his resignation of office to the Queen, stating at the same time his willingness to give a general support to his successor, in carrying measures founded on the principle of reconsidering the Corn Laws and simultaneously relieving the land from unduly onerous charges.

The formation of a new Ministry was entrusted by the Queen to Lord John Russell. At first, conscious that the country was not favourably disposed towards him, and that in the House of Commons his party was in a minority

of 90, the Whig leader, notwithstanding his proverbial courage, hesitated. His difficulties are forcibly indicated in a letter which during the crisis Macaulay addressed to a correspondent: *—"Will Lord John," he says, "attempt to form a Government? Can such a Government abolish the Corn Duties? Can it stand three months with the present House of Commons? Would even a dissolution give the Whigs a working majority in the Commons? And, even if we had such a majority in the Commons, what could we do with the Lords? Are we to swamp them, as Lord Grey's Ministry proposed to do? Have we sufficient support in the country to try so extreme a measure? Are we to go on, as Lord Melbourne's Ministry did?—unable to carry our own bills, and content with holding the executive functions, and distributing the loaves and fishes? Or are we, after an unsuccessful attempt to settle the Corn question, to go out? If so, do we not leave the question in a worse position than at present?" But when Lord John was apprised by the Queen of Sir Robert Peel's promised co-operation, he seemed to see his way clearer, and after a certain exchange of opinion with the Conservative leader, Lord John accepted the trust devolved upon him. This was on the 18th of December. Next day, a new and unexpected obstacle:—Lord John was desirous of including in his Ministry both Lord Palmerston and Lord Grey. But the former nobleman would not join except as Foreign Secretary, and the latter would not join if Lord Palmerston received the Foreign Office. Both with the United States and with France our relations were in a

* 'Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay,' ii. 165.

delicate condition, and Earl Grey dreaded Lord Palmerston's "talent of keeping perpetually open all vital questions and dangerous controversies." It did not appear to the Whig leader that a Cabinet from which Lord Grey was excluded could long maintain its position; and on the 20th, therefore, he informed her Majesty of his failure to form an administration.*

Sir Robert Peel was therefore recalled, and he quickly reconstructed his Cabinet. Lord Stanley retired, and was succeeded as Colonial Secretary by Mr. Gladstone. The Duke of Buccleuch was converted to the Premier's views, and returned to office as President of the Council in place of Lord Wharncliffe, who had died suddenly on the 19th. And thus, once more, all was going well—"well for the people, and, in a large view, well for the Minister." No doubt it was painful for him to stand up in the face of the country, and acknowledge that he had hitherto been in the wrong, and that he was now

* Macaulay's comments on this *fiasco* are interesting:—"Lord Grey and Lord Palmerston are both at fault. I think Lord Grey, highly as I esteem his integrity and ability, chiefly responsible for the unfortunate situation in which we are now placed, but I suspect that Palmerston will be made the scapegoat. He is no favourite with the public. A large portion of our own friends think him a dangerous Minister. By the whole continental and American press he has been represented as the very genius of War and Discord. People will now say that, when every other place was within his reach; when he might have had the Home Office, the Colonies, the Admiralty, a peerage,—in short, his own terms,—he declared that, unless he was allowed to be where he was generally considered as a fire-brand, he would blow up his party, at a crisis when the fate of his party involved the fate of his country. I suspect that a great storm of public indignation will burst upon him, and that he will sink under it."—'Life and Letters,' ii. 673. It is needless to say that this prediction was not fulfilled.

about to concede what for years he had so steadily opposed. No doubt he was aware of the storm of obloquy and slander that was ready to burst upon him, of the reproaches that would reach him from disappointed partisans, of the taunts that would be directed at him by exultant enemies. To his keenly susceptible nature all this could not but be as gall and wormwood; but he had counted the cost,—he knew the extent of the sacrifice,—and he was prepared to bear and endure everything for the sake of his country, trusting to posterity to do him justice. He looked beyond the present to the future, and in the future he rested his confidence. Therefore, it was going well for him. In his heart he knew that he was doing a great work, and that he was doing it disinterestedly.* He knew that, as soon as it was done, the great party which he had so carefully built up, and so successfully led, would fall to pieces, and leave him alone and unfriended, a wreck upon the shore. But he knew that on the lips of thou-

* "It appears to me that the fact that he had resigned office on changing his policy, and that he did not return to it until every other ministerial combination had failed, rendered his course on this occasion more clear than on the Catholic question. To accuse him under such circumstances of changing his views in order to retain his office is as absurd as unjust. He is not even subject to the charge of retaining power after changing the opinions that he entertained on receiving it. His conduct appears to me to have been dictated by the purest patriotism, and the most complete sacrifice of personal ambition to public motive."—LORD DALLING, 'Sir Robert Peel,' p. 138. A great deal too much is said in praise of consistency as an element of statesmanship. Generally speaking, it is the virtue of a narrow and purblind intellect, incapable of appreciating the logic of events. A man who never changes his opinions cannot always be in the right.

sands and thousands of his countrymen his name would become a household word; that it would descend to posterity as that of the statesman who incurred the anger of his followers and the sarcasm of his opponents, who gave up a political position of unequalled prosperity and abandoned the prospects of a long ministerial career, in order that he might give "cheap bread" to the people.

The session opened on the 19th of January, 1846, amid the vast excitement of political parties and the general stir and expectancy of the nation. In his speech on the Address Sir Robert Peel made haste to announce the alteration which had taken place in his opinions on the Corn Laws. "I have had the means and the opportunity of comparing the results of periods of abundance and low prices with periods of scarcity and high prices, and of marking from day to day the effect upon great social interests of freedom of trade and comparative abundance. I have not failed to note the results of preceding years, and to contrast them with the results of the last three years; and I am led to the conclusion, that the main grounds of public policy on which protection has been defended are not tenable. I do not believe, after the experience of the last three years, that the rate of wages varies with the price of food, or that with high prices wages will necessarily vary in the same ratio. I do not believe that a low price of food necessarily implies a low rate of wages. Neither can I, after seeing the results of the change in the tariff, during the last four years, maintain that protection to domestic industry is necessarily good. Then, as to the other argu-

ment which, I confess, made a great impression on me in the first instance, and is sanctioned by great authority—that because we have a heavy debt, and a high rate of taxation, we must be protected from competition with foreign industry. That argument has been submitted to the test of the last three years, and so far as the experience of that period can teach us, we find that a large debt and heavy taxation are best encountered by abundance and cheapness of provisions, which rather alleviate than add to the weight of the burden." He proceeded to acknowledge that, considering his change of opinions, he was not the man to deal with the existing Corn Laws; but he showed that, owing to the inability of Lord John Russell to form a government, he and his colleagues had been compelled to remain in office and propose the abolition of that system of Protection which they had taken office to uphold. Sir Robert was followed by Lord John Russell, who detailed the circumstances with which we have already made the reader familiar; and Lord John by Mr. Disraeli, who by a speech of remarkable force, bitterness, and eloquence, at once elevated himself to the rank of virtual leader of the chiefless Protectionists, and effectually secured the future consideration both of Parliament and the country.

On the 27th of January Sir Robert brought forward his financial plans for the year. Never, perhaps, except when the Reform Bill was introduced, had so much public curiosity been exhibited. The approaches to the House were thronged with eager crowds; the House itself was completely filled by members all astir with excitement,

and strangers who had succeeded in obtaining places. In the seats reserved for peers were Prince Albert and the Duke of Cambridge. The Minister developed his measures in a speech characterised by his usual lucidity of statement and wonderful mastery of details.* After explaining various reductions which he proposed to make in the Customs duties, he announced his intention to give up the sliding scale altogether; to impose a fixed duty of 10*s.* the quarter on corn; when the price of it was 48*s.* per quarter, to reduce that duty by one shilling for any shilling of rise in price till it reached 53*s.* a quarter, when the duty should be 4*s.* This arrangement was to last for three years, and then the duty was to be finally abolished. By way of compensation to the agricultural interest, he proposed the gradual removal of protective duties on manufactures, and on every description of produce, the reduction of the highway rate, the improvement of the law of settlement, the advance of public money (under certain restrictions) for the improvement of land, and some minor reliefs and concessions.

* "The speech of the Minister was eminently characteristic. While the agitated agriculture of the United Kingdom awaited with breathless suspense the formal notification of its doom, wondering by what cunning arguments the policy of its betrayer could be palliated, and by what dexterous devices its inevitable consequences might be softened, the Minister addressed and pursued at considerable length to the wondering assembly, an elaborate and argumentative statement, the object of which was to reconcile the manufacturers to the deprival of protection. . . . This remarkable man, who in private life was constrained and often awkward, who would never address a public meeting, or make an after-dinner speech without being ill at ease, in the senate was the readiest, easiest, most flexible, and adroit of men. He played upon the House of Commons as on an old fiddle."—Lord Beaconsfield, 'Lord George Bentinck,' pp. 66–69.

On the 9th of February the Minister's proposition came on for discussion; and Mr. Miles moved that the House should resolve itself into a committee on that day six months. The debate extended over twelve nights; on the 27th, the Government obtained a majority of 97 in a House of 577. On the 2nd of March the House went into committee, and opposing voices waxed loud and furious for four nights more, when the second reading was carried by a majority of 88. Party had not yet exhausted its rancour; another debate, stretched over three nights, was intervened before the third reading, which was finally carried at four o'clock in the morning of the 16th of May, by a majority of 98, in a House of 556 members.

In the Lords the opposition was neither very animated nor very protracted. Ministers obtained a majority of 47 on the second reading; the Bill passed on the 22nd of June; and four days later received the royal assent.

The debates in the Commons were marked by many displays of considerable eloquence, but still more, perhaps, by the extraordinary virulence of the personal attacks leveled at Sir Robert Peel. We must go back upwards of a hundred years, to the days when Walpole stood at bay before a host of assailants, to find any parallel to their number, their vehemence, and their injustice. In turning over the pages of the record now, one is surprised that English gentlemen, who have generally a keen sense of fairness and forbearance, should have condescended to such a paltriness of invective and misrepresentation; not less surprised that it did not meet with immediate rebuke from the good sense and genero-

sity of the House. At no period of his life did Sir Robert Peel bear himself more worthily. His temper never failed him, nor did his courage. It has been justly and eloquently remarked that he made so ample a confession of the political error of his life; so frankly and unaffectedly acknowledged the responsibility that lay upon him of avowing it; endured with such serenity the bitter reproaches poured upon him by men who whined about his treachery, and upbraided him for preferring the interests of his country to the selfish claims of a selfish class; and so nobly rose to a height of moral enthusiasm seldom attained in the commonplace atmosphere of the practical English legislature,—to a height which he himself had never before attained, and was hardly thought capable of attaining,—that from that time forth he became the object of the respect and admiration of the generous-minded of all parties.*

In his last speech on the Bill he said,—and the truthfulness and sincerity of his words, if not felt by his enraged antagonists, made a deep impression on the country,—"You have a right, I admit, to taunt me with my change of opinion on the Corn Laws; but when you say that by my adoption of the principles of Free Trade, I have acted in contradiction to those principles which I have always avowed during my whole life, that charge, at least, I say, is destitute of foundation. Sir, I will not enter at this late hour into the discussion of any other topic. I foresaw the consequences that have resulted from the measures which I thought it my duty to pro-

* Martineau, ii. 683.

pose. We were charged with the heavy responsibility of taking a security against a great calamity in Ireland. We did not act lightly. We did not form an opinion upon merely local information—the information of local authorities likely to be influenced by an undue alarm. Before I, and those who agreed with me, came to that conclusion, we had adopted every means—by local inquiry, and by sending perfectly disinterested persons of authority to Ireland—to form a just and correct opinion. Whether we were mistaken or not—I believe we were not mistaken; but, even if we were mistaken, a generous construction should be put upon the motives and conduct of those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting millions of subjects of the Queen from the consequences of scarcity and famine. Whatever may be the result of these discussions, I feel severely the loss of the confidence of those from almost all of whom I heretofore received a most generous support. . . . I recognise their perfect right, on account of the admitted failure of my speculation, to withdraw from me their confidence. . . . If I look to the prerogative of the Crown—if I look to the position of the Church—if I look to the influence of the aristocracy—I cannot charge myself with having taken any course inconsistent with Conservative principles, calculated to endanger the privileges of any branch of the legislature, or of any institutions of the country. My earnest wish has been, during my tenure of power, to impress the people of this country with a belief that the legislature was animated by a sincere desire to frame its legislation upon the principles of equity and justice. I have a strong belief that the

greatest object which we, or any other Government, can contemplate should be to elevate the social condition of that class of the people with whom we are brought into no direct relation by the exercise of the elective franchise. I wish to convince them that our object has been so to apportion taxation as to relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it, so far as is consistent with the public good, to those who are better enabled to bear it. I look to the present peace of this country; I look to the absence of all disturbance—to the non-existence of any commitment for a seditious offence; I look to the calm that prevails in the public mind; I look to the absence of all disaffection; I look to the increased and growing public confidence on account of the course you have taken in relieving trade from restrictions and industry from unjust burdens; and where there was dissatisfaction, I see contentment; where there was turbulence, I see there is peace; where there was disloyalty, I see there is loyalty; I see a disposition to confide in you, and not to agitate questions that are at the foundations of your institutions."

Early in the session, the Government had introduced a bill for the Protection of Life in Ireland, where crimes of violence had been alarmingly on the increase. Personal security, in fact, had ceased to exist in the counties of Tipperary, Clare, Roscommon, Leitrim, and Limerick. No Administration could regard with indifference the disorder that prevailed in the sister-country; and, in seeking from Parliament additional repressive powers, the Cabinet did neither more nor less than was their duty. The measure which they introduced into

the House of Lords for this purpose met there with no opposition. But in the Commons it was unfairly chosen as the *cheval de bataille* of the rival factions. Even the first reading was disputed; but the Protectionists coming to the aid of the Government, it was carried by a majority of 49. The second reading was deferred until the 9th of June. In the interval the Corn Law Repeal Bill was carried; and the Protectionists, under Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli, resolved to avenge themselves on the Minister who had "betrayed" them, by coalescing with the Whigs, and throwing out a measure which they admitted to be necessary. "It is time," exclaimed Lord George Bentinck, "that atonement should be made to the betrayed honour of Parliament and the betrayed constituencies of the empire. It is time that Europe and the world should know that treachery has been committed by the Ministers in power, but that they do not represent the honour of England. The agricultural interest may be betrayed and ruined; but let not the world think that England is a partaker in the guilt of those who now sit on the Treasury benches. The time has now come when they who love the treason that has recently been committed, though they hate the traitor, should join with those who sit on the Protectionist benches in shewing that they do not approve the recent conduct of Ministers." It is not often that so candid an avowal of animosity as a motive of Parliamentary action is heard in the House of Commons, and many of those who applauded it, if still living, must be ashamed of their applause, when they see how little it was deserved. The coalition of Whigs, Free Traders,

and Protectionists was, however, successful; and on the final division (June 26th), Government was defeated by a majority of 292 against 219. On that very evening the Corn Bill passed the House of Lords; and about the same time arrived the good news that the dispute with the United States on the Oregon boundary had been satisfactorily settled. It was, therefore, in a blaze of triumph, notwithstanding this defeat, that the great Minister retired from office. On the 29th of June, he informed the House that the Queen had accepted the resignation of the Cabinet, and that Lord John Russell had undertaken to form a new Administration. In withdrawing from his position as Prime Minister, and as the leader of a great party, he briefly reviewed the achievements of the last five years. He dwelt with regret on the loss of the confidence of honourable men which he had previously enjoyed. He strongly and earnestly declared that his Government, in bringing forward and carrying a measure which they knew would involve their ultimate fall, had been actuated simply by a desire to promote the best interests of the country. He spoke of their defeat as an event not to be regretted, but to be accepted as a just chastisement of their error in supporting, or appearing to support, principles which they were now compelled to abandon. He generously acknowledged that whatever merit might attach to the measures he had introduced, did not belong to himself, but ought to be associated with the name of the man whose pure motives, indefatigable energy, unpretending and unadorned eloquence, had compelled them all to listen to him, the name of Richard Cobden. And he

concluded with words worthy of an English Minister, and an English statesman, worthier far than inflated appeals to national pride or selfish boasts of national wealth:—"In relinquishing power, I shall leave a name severely censured, I fear, by many who, on public grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties—deeply regret that severance, not from interested or party motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government. I shall surrender power severely censured also by others who, from no interested motives, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country; I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice."

But Sir Robert Peel, in taking leave of office, did *not* take leave of power. The sympathy of the people went with him, and he was never so sure of their support as when resigning the position to which it had helped to raise him. As he left the House on the night of the memorable 29th, he was received outside by a respectful crowd,

who bared their heads when he appeared, and escorted him to his house,—a retinue which any statesman might regard with pride.

"The most triumphant portion of Sir Robert Peel's political career," says Lord Dalling,* "was that which followed his exclusion from official life. I know of no statesman who ever occupied so proud a position as that in which a greater commoner than even the first William Pitt stood from 1846 to July, 1850, when an unhappy accident filled with patriotic sorrow every heart in England. Above all parties, himself a party, he had trained his own mind into a disinterested sympathy with the intelligence of his country. He never during this period gave a vote to court democratic influence, or to win aristocratic favour. Conscientiously and firmly attached to the religion of the State, he flattered none of its prejudices, and repudiated boldly its exclusive pretensions; and his speech on the Jewish Disabilities Bill, considering that it was delivered towards the close of a career which had begun under the intolerant patronage of Lord Eldon, is perhaps the most notable and the most instructive that he ever delivered, as marking the progress of opinion during forty years in the history of England."

Out of office Sir Robert was at leisure to cultivate that love of letters, and that sympathy with art and artists, by which he was always most honourably distinguished. He collected at his seat at Drayton Manor a gallery of paintings, which included many admirable

* 'Sir Robert Peel: an Historical Sketch,' pp. 140, 141.

specimens of the English school. His patronage of artists and literary men was as generous and delicate as it was judicious. But in all the social relations of life the fine qualities of his character were highly conspicuous. As a father and as a husband, as a landlord, as a friend, it is impossible to write of him in other than terms of the most glowing praise. His house was always the centre of a refined and cultivated circle; and if his conversation had none of the geniality which marked that of Fox, or the brilliancy which marked that of Canning, it was rendered charming by its unaffected simplicity, its stores of information, and its high feeling for all that was good and beautiful.

During the closing years of his too brief life Sir Robert gave a general support to the Russell Ministry, which but for the aid of his powerful arm, must have succumbed to the attacks of an influential Opposition. Its principal legislative measure, the Irish Encumbered Estates Act, was framed upon the principles which he had laid down in one of his most powerful and cogent speeches. As session after session revealed the administrative weakness of the Government, and the little hold they had upon the confidence or respect of the country, men's eyes were more and more eagerly turned towards the ex-Minister as to a *Deus ex machinâ*, who alone could deliver the State from the difficulties that pressed upon it. The genuine liberalism of his policy was acknowledged by all thoughtful observers. As one of his critics remarks, he came to be believed in heart more "liberal" than the majority of those who assumed the name; and most men, at bottom, felt convinced that in

serving under Sir Robert the Liberal party would sacrifice nothing, excepting some false pride and a false character.

On Friday, the 28th of June, 1850, Sir Robert Peel delivered his last speech. Mr. Roebuck had brought forward a motion approving the foreign policy of the Government,* and more particularly its latest development in the shape of a ridiculous quarrel with the little state of Greece. The motion conveyed "an oblique censure" on the course which Lord Aberdeen, Sir Robert Peel's Foreign Minister, had pursued, and therefore called forth a defence from the late Premier. It was a consummately able address, vindicating the action of Sir Robert's Government, and authoritatively indicating the general lines on which the foreign policy of Great Britain should always be constructed. Next day, the 29th, Sir Robert left home on horseback, about five o'clock in the afternoon, to take his usual airing. After calling at Buckingham Palace, and inscribing his name in the Queen's book of visitors, he rode up Constitution Hill, and meeting Miss Ellis, a daughter of Lord Dover, who was also on horseback, stopped for a moment to exchange greetings. His horse, which was young and fresh, suddenly became restless, and plunging violently, threw its rider, falling at the same time with its knees upon his shoulders. Two gentlemen who were on the spot immediately raised him, and a carriage being procured, he was lifted into it and carried home. There he was so overcome by the grief and agitation of Lady Peel

* A motion condemning this policy had been introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Stanley, and carried by a majority of 35.

and his family that he fainted. Sir Benjamin Brodie and some of the most eminent surgeons of London were quickly in attendance; but such was his excessive sensibility, and so terrible were his sufferings, that he was unable to bear the necessary medical examination, and not until after his decease was it discovered that one of his ribs had been fractured, and that the broken end had perforated the left lobe of the lungs.

He sank rapidly. Several bulletins were issued in the course of Sunday to satisfy the public curiosity. Deeply anxious crowds gathered in Whitehall Gardens eager to obtain the slightest information; and throughout the country prevailed a feeling of the profoundest grief and apprehension. The bulletin on Monday morning announced that the sufferer had passed "a good night, and was on the whole better;" but the gleam of hope thus excited faded in the course of the day, as it became known that unfavourable symptoms had appeared. At ten P.M., the bulletin was ominous, for it confessed that the condition of the patient was less satisfactory than it had been in the morning. Sir Robert was now visited by his old friend, Dr. Tomlinson, Bishop of Gibraltar; and his family gathered round the dying statesman's bedside while the Bishop read the prayers for the sick. Sir James Graham, Lord Hardinge, and a few of his more intimate political friends and associates were also admitted. On Tuesday, he partook of Holy Communion; and calmly taking leave of his family and former colleagues, sank peacefully into his last sleep at nine minutes past eleven in the evening.

At the time of his death, the House of Lords was

sitting; and the melancholy news produced there a profound impression. The slip of paper conveying it was passed silently from hand to hand. No word was spoken; but "a solemn sadness stole over the faces of the peers, and they sat like men who had been suddenly converted into statues." Tributes to his memory were afterwards paid by the leading members of the legislature in both Houses; and all parties joined in the deep regret which was everywhere felt at the unexpected and premature death of one of the greatest statesmen whom England has ever trusted, loved, and honoured.

THE END.

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